

HOW TO USE MOVIE CLIPS EFFECTIVELY IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how communicators can effectively use movie clips in their preaching of God's Word. A primary premise of this thesis is that there is controversy and confusion surrounding the growing use of movie clips in preaching. While some preachers deem the use of movie clips acceptable, others are apprehensive over whether or not a movie clip will enhance or detract from their messages. To make matters more complicated, there is very limited information on the practical use of movie clips in the development and delivery of an expository sermon. What little information is in existence, is usually devoted to preaching in general and is often applied to multimedia as a whole. Therefore, this thesis is an attempt at initiating a definitive work on the effective methods and practices for using movie clips in expository preaching.

The theological foundation for this study begins by first defining what a movie clip is and how it differs from movie illustrations and video clips. The study also makes a distinction between secular and religious movie clips. Once these definitions and distinctions are made, a theological rationale is developed by showing the Bible's use of "The Visual" and how the secular and unsacred are used in Scripture. The literary review then extrapolates what current literature has to offer related to movies and preaching. The knowledge gleaned from this research was then used, at least in part, in the creation and design of a half-day workshop to teach preachers how to effectively implement the use of movie clips in their expository sermons. A Leader's Guide for teaching this material is included.

CHAPTER I

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Today, movies are not only watched in theaters and in the privacy of homes, they have also become mainstream in our culture. Both language and literature are filled with discussions of the latest and greatest films to hit the silver screen. Movies are now "the most thoroughly collaborative products of contemporary culture."¹ And as products, they are consumed by audiences across our nation. This consumption (of course), is not an act of the digestive system, but an act of soul and mind. Colin McGinn has said in his book, *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact*: "There is something about movies specifically—whether they emanate from America or France, Britain or Sweden—which succeeds in connecting to the human psyche in a deep way. Movies carry some sort of psychic charge that no other art form—perhaps no other spectacle—can quite match."² This "charge" seems to occur best, as an idea from a movie connects with a person's life. If for no other reason, this makes the power of movies indisputable today.³

¹ Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with American Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 2.

² Colin McGinn, *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact* (New York: Pantheon Press, 2005), 3.

³ Ibid.

The Nature of the Problem

The use of movie clips in sermons has grown in popularity. This is probably a direct result of movies being a cultural bridge over which preachers can walk to connect with their audiences.⁴ But with that popularity, has come a great amount of controversy and confusion. *Controversy* over whether or not a movie clip can legitimately be used in preaching. And *confusion* over how it is best used. To make matters worse, there are those who would charge movie clips as being gimmicks designed only to entertain or impress an audience. While expository preaching has always been open to a variety of creative approaches and methodologies, many who strive to effectively preach God's Word with integrity have wondered whether the use of movie clips is valid or worth the effort and trouble to use them. Because of these issues, there exists a need to describe effective methods and practices for using movie clips to support expository preaching.

The Importance of this Study

This study is important because it will benefit three different groups of people within the larger context of ministry. First, it will assist pastors who are not only responsible for shepherding the church, but are also the ones primarily responsible for the faithful and consistent proclamation of God's Word. And it is because of this week-to-week responsibility that many pastors find themselves looking for illustrations that make their messages come alive in the hearts and minds of their listeners. For this group, a movie clip may just be what they need in order to accomplish this task. And yet, because

⁴ Craig Brian Larson and Andrew Zahn, *Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching: 101 Clips to Show or Tell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 9.

of newness or unfamiliarity, movie clips are either employed haphazardly or avoided altogether.

Second, ministers who preach to youth will also benefit from this study because movie clips are regarded as a means to communicate with young people today. This is evident in the wide variety of youth-related materials dealing with the topic of movie illustrations. Therefore, this group does not seem to need a lot of validation when it comes to using movie clips. If anything, there is a greater need to address its proper use within their ministry environment.

Third, this study will benefit anyone else in ministry who strives to communicate God's Word. From the missionary on furlough speaking to an American congregation about missions; to the associate on staff filling in for the pastor—all who are engaged in the preaching ministry, whether on a part-time or consistent basis, will profit from this study.

The Goal of this Study

This particular thesis will address how to use movie clips effectively in expository preaching. Despite the many articles and chapters devoted to discussing movie illustrations as a whole, there is not a definitive work on the practical use of movie clips in the development and delivery of an expository sermon. Therefore, the outcome of this study will be a half-day workshop to answer such a need; specifically designed for pastors, youth directors, staff associates, seminary students, homiletics's professors, and anyone else who has had any current or prior preaching experience. This four hour workshop will then consist of two main parts: instruction and practicum. Having completed this intensive seminar, attendees should be able to not only understand the

vital role movie clips can play in supporting expository preaching, but they should also be able to effectively implement movie clips into their own sermons as well. With this goal in mind, this workshop is intended to complement Haddon W. Robinson's textbook, *Biblical Preaching*.⁵

In general, a brief overview of this study will not only include a theological rationale and literature review, but it will also cover the following areas:

- A case for the validity of using movie clips in biblical preaching;
- The advantages and appeal of movie clips;
- The disadvantages and dangers of movie clips;
- What makes for an effective movie clip;
- The differences between a movie clip and a video clip;
- Ideas on how to introduce movie clips within a church or ministry setting;
- A description of effective methods and practices in using movie clips;
- A list of resources for obtaining movie clips.

In summary, the goal of this thesis is to design a workshop which will not only provide helpful information, but also serve as a practical guide for those who now and in the future will use movie clips as part of their endeavor to shed light on the Truths of God's Word for all people.

⁵ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001).

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the biblical and theological issues related to using movie clips in expository preaching.⁶ While it is correct to state that there are no movie clips referenced in the biblical text, it would be incorrect to state that there is no biblical basis to support its use today in the communication of God's Word. By definition, a movie is a series of moving pictures or images (i.e., motion picture). It is a visual medium used to communicate a story—a story in which thought, action, emotion, and ideas are all conveyed in such a way that they impact our senses; thus, leading to the question: "Can a movie be employed as a communication aid or tool in the preaching event?" In order to determine that, we need to begin by defining what a movie clip is and how it varies from a movie illustration or a video clip.

Movie Clips – Defined

Since a formal definition is not in existence, a *movie clip* (also called a film clip), can be defined as the visual and audio presentation of a particular scene or combination of scenes from a specific movie created by a motion picture studio. While this description seems obvious or wordy, it is important to qualify a movie clip in such terms for two

⁶ "Expository Preaching" as defined by Haddon W. Robinson in *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 21.

reasons: (1) to serve as a basis of understanding throughout this thesis; and (2) to distinguish it from other audio or visual presentation that have been frequently mislabeled as a movie clip. In addition, since most movies are produced by the major motion picture studios in Hollywood, most movie clips tend to come from secular movies.

When a preacher uses an illustration in the delivery of a sermon that talks about a specific scene from a movie but does not actually show that scene, this is known as a *movie illustration*. While a movie illustration can become a movie clip, it can only do so if an audience sees and hears the actual scene from the movie. In other words, once a scene is displayed and heard, it should be referred to as a movie clip and not a movie illustration.

A movie clip is also sometimes incorrectly called a *video clip*. This most likely occurs because a movie clip does contain video or moving images. Yet, a video clip differs from a movie clip in the following ways: (1) a video clip does not always contain audio; (2) a video clip is a short segment that is either an excerpt from a larger whole or is a self-contained entity in itself; and (3) a video clip does not feature any part of a movie from a motion picture studio. A movie clip on the other hand, is always an excerpt from a larger film and always contains audio as well as video. In addition, while a movie clip may represent a single scene within a motion picture, it is never a self-contained entity like a video clip, which is usually created as a standalone featurette. Some examples of video clips include:

- Motion backgrounds behind words on a screen;
- Short segments (clips) taken from television;
- Originally created videos made by a church to be used in a sermon;

- Purchased video featurettes from 3rd parties intended for church use.

Once again, although many have confused the terminology, the distinction between a movie clip, a movie illustration, and a video clip is vital, not only for the purpose of this study, but also to distinguish it from the many types of media available today.

Movie Clips – Distinguished

As important as it is to understand what a movie clip is, it is equally important to take note of the distinction between movie clips taken from *secular* films and movie clips taken from *sacred* or religious films, also known as Christian movies. With that said, this study will primarily be concerned with movie clips taken from the created works of secular motion picture studios. While today there exists a growing trend by these studios to produce films that appeal to Christians, this does not override the fact that they are indeed secular in nature and purpose. As Terry Lindvall defines in his book, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry*:

Christian films are films of, by, and for the people of the church, not aspiring to high aesthetic values nor aiming for economic profit, but seeking to renew, uplift, and propagate. They are tribal films, told and retold within their own community to carry on its traditions and values. The makers of these films go against the grain of mere entertainment to produce a genre of religious cinema that is remarkably political: political because it subverts the secular city by envisioning, however inartistically or superficially, the City of God.⁷

With secular movie clips being the scope of our study, it therefore creates a unique series of challenges in being able to describe effective methods and practices for using movie

⁷ Terry Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 1.

clips to support expository preaching. However, these challenges will be addressed in the following pages.

Biblical Uses of "The Visual"

As stated, while there are obviously no references to a movie clip being utilized in God's Word, the presence of "The Visual" is seen throughout Scripture. By "The Visual," we mean any object or element or representation that could be seen and used in the Bible. With that said, we must differentiate between those passages that simply *use* "The Visual" and those passages that actually use "The Visual" *as a means to communicate* a message, a lesson, or a particular truth. The latter case providing the theological rationale we seek.

An example of a passage that simply *uses* "The Visual" is found in Genesis 15:5 where God tells Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. "The Visual" here of course, is the stars, which serve as a simile or visual symbol as to the countless generations that would come from Abraham. "The Visual" is then a constant reminder that every time Abraham looks into the night sky he will remember God's covenant and promise to him.

Another example of a passage that simply *uses* "The Visual" is found in Exodus 3. In this passage God uses something visual, to catch Moses' attention, which obviously worked. In his own words: "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."⁸ Here, "The Visual" is a visible manifestation of God's glory and is also symbolic of His holiness.

⁸ Exodus 3:3 NIV.

In showing a distinction between passages that simply use "The Visual" and passages that use it to communicate a message, a lesson or particular truth; one may argue that in the two examples just given, that "The Visual" in these passages do indeed communicate some message, as *indirect* as it may be. And yet, if we truly want to build a case to support the use of movie clips in expository preaching, we must not settle for anything less than for those passages where we see a *direct* correlation between "The Visual" and its intended message. If we fail to make such distinctions, one may read about an object or symbol being used in the Bible and go: "You see...here's why we can use movie clips!"

Since this study will not seek to examine every passage where a *direct* correlation exists between "The Visual" and its intended message, the following criteria are given:

(1) "The Visual" in the passage is more than just a symbol or simile or metaphor; (2) "The Visual" in the passage is more than a mere reminder when seen at a later time; (3) "The Visual" in the passage must be seen and have been seen by more than one person or intended for more than one person; and (4) "The Visual" must be accompanied by a verbal message, lesson or particular truth, though it be perceived or not perceived by its intended audience. We will now examine a number of passages that meet each of these four criteria.

Jeremiah's Jar

Through many stages of his ministry, Jeremiah was called on by the Lord to use various dramatic and unconventional means to share God's message *visually*. One such occasion occurred in Jeremiah 19:1-15. Here, Jeremiah is ordered to purchase a jar (יָבֵיכָה) from a potter and then preach a series of judgment messages before, during, and

after he breaks the jar as a sign or symbol of what God was about to do to His people for their disobedience and idolatry. The drama began building as the elders and priests accompanying Jeremiah that day, saw the jar being purchased, carried off through the Potsherd Gate, taken to the Valley of Ben-hinnom and Topheth where the drama finally comes to a climax as the jar is smashed. It should be noted that the jar's excursion, is a reminder that God is capable of *visually* dramatizing His Word.⁹ Walter Brueggemann puts it this way: "There is no doubt that [this] dramatic act [of smashing that jar]...opened up a field of fertile imagination filled with dread and fresh discernment...a parabolic assault on [their] imagination."¹⁰ This dramatic gesture indicated the violence of the coming judgment, a form of street theatre, and yet with a far more serious purpose than mere attraction or entertainment; for the action both dramatizes and serves up a *visual* impact of the coming action of God.¹¹

What we then have laid out before us in this passage is a case where the audience is taken on a journey, with "The Visual"—the jar—being the medium and mode of transportation. To discover this, one must look deeper behind all the dramatic subtleties. For starters, the Hebrew word for "clay jar" is onomatopoeic in that the word itself (baqbuq) sounds like the gurgling of water being poured out.¹² The significance of this is

⁹ John Guest, *The Communicator's Commentary*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, vol. 17 (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 151.

¹⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile & Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), 177.

¹¹ R. E. Clements, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, ed. James Luther Mays, *Jeremiah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 118.

¹² Charles L. Feinberg, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, *Jeremiah*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 495.

heightened by what plays out before us in the text. With water being a timeless and universal symbol of life (i.e., "plans" in v.7a referring here to all the plans or intentions one may have in life), many scholars believe that Jeremiah maximizes the use of "The Visual" by pouring out the water in the jar as he proclaims, "In this place I will *ruin* the plans of Judah and Jerusalem."¹³ Here the word for "ruin" or *baqaq* (בָּקַעַ) is the verbal form of the Hebrew noun for "jar."

If this dumping of the water wasn't enough, "The Visual" of the jar was magnified by the location of the exit Jeremiah and company took, and the location of their destination, both related to some form of "dumping". In verse 2 we are told that Jeremiah and his party exited from the potter's house and went out through the Potsherd Gate. The association this gate would bring to the senses is no coincidence. The Potsherd Gate, probably in the south wall of Jerusalem, was thought to be the exit through which broken pottery and other garbage was taken out to the city's dump.¹⁴ This city dump was none other than the Valley of Ben-hinnom, an ideal place to perform the symbolic act in vv.10-11¹⁵ since just as the unrepairable jar would need throwing out, so would the bodies of the people. Thus, the renaming of the valley to "The Valley of Slaughter" was suitable, especially since the valley would soon hold more body parts than bits of trash.

¹³ Jeremiah 19:7a NIV.

¹⁴ Terence E. Fretheim, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*, ed. Mark K. McElroy, *Jeremiah*, vol. 15 (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2002), 282.

¹⁵ J. A. Thompson, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1992), 448.

The weight of Jeremiah's message is strengthened even further due to "The Visual" connection of the clay jar to the associated location of its smashing called Topheth, a place in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. For just as pottery requires fire to harden its form, so Topheth which means "fireplace," was a place where God's people hardened their hearts through the horrible and idolatrous act of sacrificing their children¹⁶ as burnt offerings to Baal and the fires of Molech (cf. 32:35). These charred remains were then collected and placed ironically in earthenware jars.¹⁷ Thus, it seems fitting that the judgment message Jeremiah announced at the breaking of his jar, painted a picture where Topheth would be turned from a pagan sanctuary to a populous cemetery.

So far, we have discussed how "The Visual" of the jar and its settings, have played a major role in effectively conveying Jeremiah's message. Yet the most powerful part in this entire passage is where Jeremiah actually breaks the jar. The very symbolic act being tantamount to a word from God to where even in the absence of words, the very act of smashing the jar would declare the will of God in that it was a divine word set in motion.¹⁸ So much so, that "it mattered little whether Jeremiah declared verbally that Jerusalem would be destroyed or whether he declared the same by smashing a jar."¹⁹ And yet here, action and word together participate in a swirling drive toward judgment.²⁰

¹⁶ Trent Butler, "Tophet," in *Holmon Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 1608.

¹⁷ J. Andrew Dearman, *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck, *Jeremiah and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 186.

¹⁸ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 445.

¹⁹ Ibid, 452.

²⁰ Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 284.

There is no doubt that the breaking of the jar was a symbol of the destruction that would befall God's people.²¹ Thus, just as the jar is broken, so will they. An incredible *visual* illustration of the message Jeremiah delivered.²²

The Signs of Ezekiel

One of the most peculiar passages in the Old Testament is Ezekiel 4:1—5:17. Within this portion of prophetic narrative, we discover what some call—"God's way of communicating truth without words."²³ In this pericope of Scripture, Ezekiel is given the command to perform four symbolic actions that would dramatize God's message to His people. These acted-out parables which warned of judgment, demanded an audience.²⁴ And with an audience at hand, these street theater-like actions, would then serve as teaching aids, dramatically *visualizing* the oral message of the prophet.²⁵ This allowed the *visual* sign-act and its message to work together in sending a mutual message, one that confirmed God's intent. Therefore, "If actions speak louder than words, here they were a megaphone for the prophetic words."²⁶

²¹ Ibid, 283.

²² Tim Willis, *The College Press NIV Commentary*, ed. Terry Briley and Paul Kissling, *Jeremiah-Lamentations* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Co, 2002), 171.

²³ Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 91.

²⁴ Ralph H. Alexander, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, *Ezekiel*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 769.

²⁵ Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, *Ezekiel 1-19*, vol. 28 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1994), 65.

²⁶ Ibid.

The first of these actions or signs is sometimes labeled by scholars as "The Sign of the Brick:"

"Now you son of man, get yourself a brick, place it before you, and inscribe a city on it, Jerusalem. "Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps, and place battering rams against it all around. "Then get yourself an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel.²⁷

This brick or clay tablet (לְבִנִּיָּה), was then to be inscribed with a diagram of Jerusalem.

The prophet was to then act out a siege on it with various war-like implements. Here, the brick was "The Visual" used to communicate the message that just as Ezekiel lay siege against this clay tablet, so God would cause Judah's enemies to lay siege against Jerusalem.

The second sign was dramatized by the prophet lying on his side. As ordered, Ezekiel laid bound on his left side for 390 days and laid bound on his right side for 40 days. Ezekiel 4:4-8 describes the act in full:

"As for you, lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it. "For I have assigned you a number of days corresponding to the years of their iniquity, three hundred and ninety days; thus you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. "When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, *but* on your right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah; I have assigned it to you for forty days, a day for each year. "Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it. "Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege."²⁸

²⁷ Ezekiel 4:1-3, NASB.

²⁸ Ezekiel 4:4-8, NASB.

Here, "The Visual" was the combination of seeing Ezekiel's *posture* (bearing his full weight as he lay on his two sides), the *period* in which he stayed in that posture, and the bound *position* he faced (left for Israel and right for Judah). These three visual elements, communicated God's message of judgment, just as much as the words Ezekiel spoke as he laid there prophesying.

The third symbolic action taken by Ezekiel concerned his diet and the means in which he cooked his food. As the Scripture states:

"But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days. "Your food which you eat *shall be* twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time. "The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time. "You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked *it* in their sight over human dung." Then the LORD said, "Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them." But I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth." Then He said to me, "See, I will give you cow's dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread." Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by measure and in horror, because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity."²⁹

It is obvious that these actions reinforced the message of the previous dramas of the brick and the laying on his side.³⁰ And although the prophet does not state the exact time of day that he performed these dramatic acts, he likely chose a time when an audience was present in the street or marketplace.³¹ "The Visual" of meager rations (food and water)

²⁹ Ezekiel 4:9-17, NASB.

³⁰ Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 97.

³¹ Ibid.

and the unclean manner in which they were to be prepared, presented a double lesson that dramatized the severe conditions of the siege and the affect it will have on God's people.³²

The fourth and final symbolic action, called on Ezekiel to shave his head and beard, weigh it (symbolizing judgment), and then divide it into three equal parts. As this passage records:

"As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword; take and use it *as* a barber's razor on your head and beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair. "One third you shall burn in the fire at the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike *it* with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. "Take also a few in number from them and bind them in the edges of your *robes*. "Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel."³³

Such a performance by a priest would be considered an act of self-defilement and self-humiliation (Lev.21:5). Yet, here in this passage it represented "The Visual," which symbolized the humiliation of the people of Judah who were indeed defiled and no longer holy to the Lord.³⁴ The weight of this message is made heavier by what each group of shaved hair personified. If the famine of the siege wasn't enough—one-third of the people would be burned to death, one-third would die by the sword, and one-third would go into exile. And yet despite this drama of doom, a glimmer of hope remained, for out of this final third would come the remnant. One can only imagine the shock of witnessing such a public event involving a priest and prophet of God. And yet, with the words found in

³² Ibid.

³³ Ezekiel 5:1-4, NASB.

³⁴ Alexander, *Ezekiel*, 771.

verses 5-17, we see that "The Visual" symbolic actions performed were not complete in and of themselves; but rather, they were a proclamation.³⁵ In the end, these four dramatic and *visual* signs, "gave Ezekiel's message an arresting character."³⁶

Jesus' Use of "The Visual"

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He employed the use of "The Visual" in His preaching and teaching. We will now examine two such passages, beginning with Matthew 22:15-22:

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.³⁷

As this story indicates, the Pharisees tried to entrap (παγιδεύω) Jesus. And yet, what started off as a trap, turned into an occasion for Jesus to reveal truth, which is ironic because that's exactly the unbelieving flattery they offered in order to entice Him. And yet, it was Jesus who actually springs the trap.³⁸ And the disarming device He uses is

³⁵ Walther Zimmerli, *Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Frank Moore Cross and Klaus Baltzer, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 174.

³⁶ Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 91.

³⁷ Matthew 22:15-22, NIV.

³⁸ Ben Witherington, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, *Matthew*, vol. 19 (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 411.

none other than the coin in question. Here, "The Visual" itself (the coin), becomes the instrument of the object lesson.

Another passage where Jesus uses "The Visual" is found in John 13:1-17, where He washes the disciples' feet:

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."³⁹

Many have attempted to make more of this passage, by using it as a support text to justify the addition of another ordinance in the church to go along with communion and baptism. However, Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet was a *visual* representation of "the full extent of His love" (v.1), which was to then serve as an example (v.15) of the full extent of the love we should have for one another. This "full extent" (εἰς τέλος) love, is captured in this scene we have from John's gospel. Yet, the impact of this passage can not be fully

³⁹ John 13:1-17, NIV.

realized by mere words alone. For "The Visual" representation of foot washing that we have here in the text is a portrait proof of love—a mere demonstration that if He is willing to wash the filth from their feet, then He is certainly willing to wash the sin from their souls.

For the original audience and for those of us now, "The Visual" is used to communicate two lessons, at least one of which we are to strive to live by. First, that love is "fully" expressed by our willingness to humbly serve one another "with no vestige of pride or position."⁴⁰ And second, that love in its "fullest," freely offers itself up so that others might *be* cleansed and *belong*.

"The Visual" in this passage must have carried even a greater affect in the aftermath of Jesus' death. For in the disciples' minds, it was one of the last images they remembered seeing of Him before His death on the cross, which many believe this *visual* foreshadows. In that sense, we may conclude a third truth or representation from this *visual*. That it also serves to represent the cross. As Ernst Haenchen puts it: "[John] understands the act of Jesus as an act of condescending love that reaches its apex in the cross. The foot washing is essentially identical with the event of the cross as an interpretation, as an explanation of the cross as a deed of condescending love."⁴¹

In light of all this, we must also draw attention to one last thing—the words of verse 3. For it shows that within this scene, Jesus is fully aware that the Father has given

⁴⁰ Rodney A. Whitacre, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, ed. Grant R. Osborne, *John*, vol. 4 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 332.

⁴¹ Ernst Haenchen, *Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Robert W. Funk, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 107.

Him full authority and power. And yet, He still voluntarily performs this lowliest of tasks. Therefore, "The Visual" of foot washing, not only adds validity to the message that follows (v.8ff), but it also adds tremendous force for future audiences—a force that compels one to act in passionate love towards others; thus, following Christ's "example" (v.15).

Biblical Uses of "The Secular and Unsacred"

In discussing the use of secular and unsacred movie clips, two questions arise: (1) is a movie clip valid in the preaching of an expository sermon; and (2) does the use of such a clip lead to more controversy. These questions are understandable, since those who truly strive to preach God's Word, want to do so knowing that they have not crossed some moral or ethical boundary that is either set by our culture or the cultural makeup of the people within our individual ministry settings. Even worse, one does not want to violate his or her conscience in possibly crossing some *biblical* boundary by using a secular movie clip. Thus, to counter these fears and objections, we are led to ask: "Does the Bible in any way, demonstrate and redeem the use of the secular or the unsacred in a good and godly way?" The answer in short, is yes! We will now examine both an Old Testament passage and a New Testament passage that will provide the biblical support we need.

Union of the Snake

Anyone who has ever read or studied the Old Testament is familiar with the nation of Israel's continual choice of rebellion and disobedience to the Lord. From its infancy as a nation, to its exile in captivity, the Israelites seemed to always find

themselves in a vicious cycle of blessing and cursing, life and death, and victory and defeat. One such passage is found in Numbers 21:4-9:

They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.⁴²

Although this passage is alluded to by Jesus in the Gospel of John, many in the past have taken issue with the idea that God seemed to advocate breaking His own second commandment dealing with images and idols. One could even speculate that Moses was taken aback by this order, especially if he knew how this bronze snake would later become an object of worship (2 Kings 18:4).⁴³ These concerns and more, represented peoples' initial view of films as the industry began. Interestingly enough, before the church finally accepted movies in the early part of the twentieth century, the very thing that they had to get over was their tendency to associate films with graven images and bronze serpents.⁴⁴ Just the idea of moving images was theologically problematic (at first) for some who saw movies as a violation of the second commandment.⁴⁵ This was not

⁴² Numbers 21:4-9, NIV.

⁴³ Ronald B. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, *Numbers*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 877.

⁴⁴ Terry Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry*, 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

helped in any way by popular media and celebrity figures who accused movies of having a serpent-like hold on people's attention, basically calling movies back then, "the celluloid serpent."⁴⁶ And yet, despite early fears and criticisms, it is this very passage that was cited against movies that ironically provides the necessary theological framework to support them.

To see this, we need to understand that while God did command "Moses to employ a *visual* antivenom,"⁴⁷ the symbol of the snake was primarily seen as a pagan and even cultic element in that ancient culture.⁴⁸ Yet interestingly enough, although it was viewed as a symbol of evil, it was also seen as "a symbol of fertility, life, and healing."⁴⁹ Perhaps because of this symbol's dualistic role, there are those who have boldly suggested that the symbol of the snake or serpent (נָחָשׁ), be somehow associated with God. This is due to the use of the same Hebrew word found here in Numbers and in Isaiah's vision of seraphim (שֶׁרָפִים). Yet, one must take note of the fact that the Hebrew Old Testament employs this same word for a variety of serpent-like creatures. Thus, the meaning of this word is truly dependent upon its use and context within a specific passage.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 15-16.

⁴⁷ Roy Gane, *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 679.

⁴⁸ Dennis T. Olson, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, ed. James Luther Mays, *Numbers* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 136.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Despite these attempts of trying to soften the symbol of the snake, its visual image overwhelmingly remains associated with something *unsacred*. This is why historically, many rabbinic scholars when looking at the use of the bronze snake in this passage "were disturbed by the magical nature of this cure, and suggested that it was the glance of the afflicted to their father in heaven, rather than the snake, which effected the cure."⁵⁰ Therefore, even though the events here and in the Gospels both demonstrate that "the cure for snakes is snake; the cure for human life is one man's life; the cure for death is death"⁵¹—we can not strip away the idea pressed upon the human mind that the snake or its symbol, is something to be either scared of or once again, something to be seen as unsacred; an unsacred visual image that God, nonetheless, redemptively used for His sacred purposes.

Life Altar-ing Sermon

Throughout Paul's ministry, he encountered both the strange and the secular, in his attempts to convert the gentiles and fulfill his mission with the saints. One such occasion was in Athens. Here the Scripture records:

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"-- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching

⁵⁰ As cited from the note for Num.21:9 Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, comps., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 326.

⁵¹ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 682.

is which you are proclaiming? "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.) So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.⁵²

Evidently, Paul was not planning on preaching in Athens and seemed to be there only to escape persecution in Macedonia.⁵³ And yet, as he waited for Timothy and Silas, his spirit was moved by all the pagan idols around him to where he felt compelled to preach to the Jews in the synagogue and the gentiles in the marketplace. Basically, the apostle shared Christ with anyone who would listen to him.

Athens itself provided a unique setting for Paul's preaching ministry. For while the city had lost some of its former glory, it could still boast of being the greatest center

⁵² Acts 17:16-34, NASB.

⁵³ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, *Acts*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 472.

of philosophy, architecture, art and even religion.⁵⁴ And in Paul's day, "it was still considered the cultural and intellectual center of the Roman Empire."⁵⁵ Being such, it is no wonder that Paul encountered the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as he preached. Their combined views and thinking remarkably reflect today's postmodern culture here in the West.⁵⁶ Even the common Athenian citizen's religious temperament reflects our postmodern culture today in that they too had an ambivalent relation to the gods.⁵⁷ This meant that while they would incorporate all alien deities into their pantheon, they also "believed [that] they must stay vigilant lest 'new gods' undermine the morals of the state."⁵⁸ How true of our culture, whose own conflicting fickleness allows them to be open and tolerant to all sorts of religious ideas and gods; all except the one God (and His Son) whose ways are seen by many as a threat to the state and their way of life. Interestingly enough, as Paul is brought to the Areopagus to make his case, he is keenly aware of all that encompasses his unique setting there in Athens.

With that said, there are at least three things from this passage that provide the necessary theological support for the use of secular movie clips in expository preaching. The first one deals with Paul's approach to the *philosophy* of that day. As we have said, the philosophy of that day closely resembled today's postmodern outlook. Thus, Paul's

⁵⁴ William J. Larkin Jr, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, ed. Grant R. Osborne, *Acts*, vol. 5 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 251.

⁵⁵ John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery, *Acts*, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 365-366.

⁵⁶ William J. Larkin Jr, *Acts*, 251.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 253.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 254.

choice of something visual and secular (the pagan altar), as his point of contact in dealing with the thinking and values of that day, serves to validate the role secular movie clips can play in connecting with today's audiences in our preaching.

The second thing in this passage that argues for the use of secular movie clips is the *pagan altar* itself, which in actuality is the cornerstone piece for the other two supporting elements. Here, Paul's application of the pagan altar "To an Unknown God" (Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ), acts as a primary route in bridging the biblical message of the gospel to the secular mindset he was preaching to that day. It was "the perfect launching pad for his presentation of monotheism to the polytheistic and pantheistic Athenians."⁵⁹ Of course, many have regarded Paul's sermon here in Acts, as being totally out of character for the apostle. And yet, for one who elsewhere said that he was willing to be "all things to all men" for the sake of the gospel (1Cor.9:20-22), Paul's visual and secular approach to the Areopagus audience is by no means out of character.⁶⁰ In fact if anything, Paul's use of the pagan altar established a "common ground" for his hearers, whereby he could then lead them to accept the person and work of Christ.⁶¹ Therefore, it can be said that "The Visual" implementation of secular movie clips in expository sermons, can also provide a "common ground" for audiences today.

The third and final supporting element, we find in this text, is Paul's quoting of two *pagan poems*. These two maxims from Greek poets in verse 28 come from Epimenides ("For in thee we live and move and have our being") and Aratus ("For we are

⁵⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, 371.

⁶⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, 475-476.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 476.

also his offspring").⁶² Of course, Paul is not suggesting that God is to be thought in polytheistic or pantheistic terms.⁶³ Rather he is making the case that the poets his hearers view as authoritative "have to some extent corroborated [with] his message."⁶⁴ In the words of Richard N. Longenecker:

In [Paul's] search for a measure of common ground with his hearers, he is, so to speak, disinfecting and rebaptizing the poets' words for his own purposes. Quoting Greek poets in support of his teaching sharpened his message. But despite its form, Paul's address was thoroughly biblical and Christian in its content. It is perhaps too strong to say that "the remarkable thing about this famous speech is that for all its wealth of pagan illustration its message is simply the Galilean gospel."⁶⁵

To that point, one can assert that a preacher can also "disinfect and rebaptize" a secular movie clip to serve his or her "own purpose;" thus, utilizing something that once was secular in nature for something good and godly.

Summary

In exploring a theological rationale for the use of movie clips in expository preaching, we have attempted to associate this modern visual of movies, with "The Visual" objects, elements, and representations used in the biblical text. Having studied its role in the Scriptures, we can now safely conclude that many passages in the Bible demonstrate how "The Visual" (though secular or even unsacred), can be properly employed in the communication of God's Word.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 476-477.

We saw how Jeremiah showed us that "The Visual," be it dramatic and unconventional in nature, can strengthen the urgency of God's message. In Ezekiel's uses of "The Visual," we witnessed how they could capture the attention and imagination of God's people. For Jesus, "The Visual" served as object lessons and representations of the truth which He proclaimed throughout His ministry. In Moses' case, we experienced the way in which God could take something *visually* unsacred and use it for His sacred purposes. And finally in Paul's ministry, we observed how one can use "The Visual" to build a bridge in sharing God's message, without watering it down. Paul also spoke to those of us today who consider ourselves to be communicator's of God's Word, for our need to be engaged and informed of its secular culture; if for no other reason, to use this knowledge in reaching those outside of the faith. One can even argue that Paul's very use of the secular and "The Visual," provided a paradigm for preachers today.⁶⁶

In summary then, the practice of utilizing secular movie clips, can aid our preaching in many ways. If anything, they can faithfully serve as the means to reintroduce Christians and non-Christians to Jesus in a fresh and new way; all "without resorting to the traditional formulations they will call the 'old, old story.'"⁶⁷ They can also function as tools in helping us to engage our culture and the various people within our culture. From our lawmakers to our educators, from our white-collar workers to our blue collar-workers, from our young to our old—virtually anyone and everyone can be reached and touched by the effective use of movie clips in expository preaching today. In

⁶⁶ David John Williams, *New International Biblical Commentary*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, *Acts*, vol. 5 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 301.

⁶⁷ William J. Larkin Jr, *Acts*, 253.

the end, a secular and even unsacred movie clip can play a vital part, in "The Visual" communication of God's Word, to a modern audience.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, we defined a movie clip and drew a distinction between secular movies clips and those that are considered sacred (i.e., Christian). We made this distinction in order to focus this study on the use of secular movie clips in expository preaching. We also examined how the Bible uses "The Visual"—both sacred and secular—to communicate a message, a lesson, or a particular truth. We then classified modern visual forms of movies and movie clips with "The Visual" objects, elements, and representations used in the Scriptures. This analysis lead to the conclusion that because the Bible demonstrates and allows for the use of "The Visual" in the communication of God's Word, we can therefore make the theological assumption that movie clips are permissible and, in fact, helpful in the practice of preaching.

With this theological framework in mind, we will explore what recent literature has to say on the subject. Although the majority of the available literature does not directly examine movie clips, it does: (1) lump them into the category of multimedia, video, or popular technology used in worship services; (2) speak about the impact movies have on those inside and outside the church; or (3) briefly touch on the use of movie illustrations or film clips as possible support material. In addition, due to the increasing curiosity and controversy generated over this issue of using movie clips during a worship service, there are a growing number of articles and chapters devoted to discussing the

role movie illustrations or film clips have in preaching and teaching. And yet, while more and more literature is being written to address the thesis topic, as previously stated no definitive work exists on the practical use of movie clips in the development and delivery of an expository sermon. Therefore, this chapter attempts to extrapolate what current literature has to offer regarding the subject and identify what is helpful or noteworthy for supporting the thesis.

Movies as Art

The significance of validating movies as art can not be underestimated—doing so certifies that this medium holds equivalent value to such higher-art forms as painting and music. Thus, if we consider movies to be art, we must then concede that they are also capable, like other art forms, of conveying thoughts, ideas, and beauty. This stands in contrast to those critics who label movies as palettes of pure entertainment. In the words of David W. Henderson, author of *Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World*:

Movies...provide, before anything else, ways to entertain. Their primary purpose is not to teach, to remind, to challenge, to propose, or even to record; it [does nothing more than] to happily distract us...when we watch something...we often find ourselves with the awkward feeling of being trapped between active engagement and complete uninvolvedness. We're thinking, but we're not. We may try to wrestle with the ideas that come to us from the screen, but more often we are quickly pinned by them. We get "held between," caught in a land of mere amusement.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ David W. Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 75.

Of course, others have expressed sentiments similar to Henderson's. Some, like Thomas De Zengotita, simply see movies as "stress dramas" that allow us to feel like we're busy and productive, even when we're not.⁶⁹

Despite this criticism of movies, many Christian authors, both past and present, have gone on record to voice otherwise. Perhaps the most well-known, modern voice to say that art is not only beautiful but biblical was Francis A. Schaeffer in his acclaimed book, *Art and the Bible*. Schaeffer was also one of the first to identify movies as art.⁷⁰ For Schaeffer, this meant that a movie, as a work of art, had value. He stated that movies have value because they are "[works] of creativity, and creativity has value because God is the Creator;" thus, this creativity is evidence that man is made in the image of God, for only a created work like man can create.⁷¹ In addition, in reading Schaeffer's work, it is reasonable to conclude that describing movies as popular expressions of art, as he called them, does not diminish their value.⁷² Just like other higher-art forms, movies are vehicles used to propagate and embody a particular message.⁷³ This should not be seen as strange or false, for according to William D. Romanowski "Popular art can be used for

⁶⁹ Thomas De Zengotita, *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), 191.

⁷⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 33.

⁷¹ Ibid, 34.

⁷² Ibid, 33.

⁷³ Ibid, 37.

confessional purposes—to enhance worship, make statements of belief, exhort believers to faithful living, or attempt to evangelize.”⁷⁴

Of course, even if one claims movies as art and is willing to accept all that this entails, there is still the issue of their secular nature. As Romanowski points out, it is for this very reason that some Christians today think that avoiding secular movies altogether is the mark of a true believer.⁷⁵ And yet, for many Christians, this has not changed their viewing habits, which according to national surveys is no different than that of non-Christians.⁷⁶ The reason for this lack of distinction is that most Christians feel like they are “immune to the messages of the popular arts because they view them as mere ‘entertainment’” and nothing else.⁷⁷ But if film directors are modern-day artists, as John P. Newport calls them,⁷⁸ and if movies are art, then we must wrestle with the question of whether or not a secular movie can project Christian ideas and values.

Having posed this question, there are those who would say that a secular movie can certainly project Christian ideals and values, and also argue that this sort of inquiry is pointless because there are no divisions in art between the secular and the sacred. In the words of Steve Turner, author of *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts*:

⁷⁴ William D. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 40.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 35.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 41.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 42.

⁷⁸ John P. Newport, *Christianity and Contemporary Art Forms* (Waco: Word, 1992), 45.

The Bible has no equivalent division between secular and religious in the believer's life because anything good in the temporal world can be "set apart for God," in other words made sacred.⁷⁹

Others like Schaeffer would agree and would even declare that for art to be considered sacred, it does not have to necessarily deal with "religious subject matter."⁸⁰ In fact, he would even enounce that it is possible for a non-Christian artist to create a work of art "according to a Christian world view even though he himself is not a Christian."⁸¹ Schaeffer does warn, however, that "just as it is possible for a non-Christian to be inconsistent and to paint God's world in spite of his personal philosophy, it is [equally] possible for a Christian to be inconsistent and embody in his [works of art], a non-Christian world view."⁸² Even so, he would argue that, at times, the most religious of themes may be the most non-Christian.⁸³ Therefore, one can conclude from these comments that secular movies *can* convey Christian ideas and values. As Steve Turner eloquently put it:

Art...has intrinsic value...and can act on God's side by preserving beauty and drawing out the highest achievements capable by humans. The arts can help preserve and renew cultures and this is a good thing in itself...[one that] must bring pleasure to God...[being that they] can sharpen the vision, quicken the intellect, preserve the memory, activate the conscience, enhance the understanding and refresh language. [All-in-all]...the visual arts help us see with greater clarity. They

⁷⁹ Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 57.

⁸⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 19.

⁸¹ Ibid, 45.

⁸² Ibid, 46.

⁸³ Ibid, 61-62.

draw our attention to overlooked details...[and] they restore our sense of amazement.⁸⁴

Movies as Magic

Referring to movies as "magic" does not imply that they carry some form of mystical power, but it does assert that movies undoubtedly have a sort of fantastic appeal and emotional power over audiences. What exactly causes this effect is debatable—some might argue that it is part mystery and part marketing. Regardless of the answer, movies somehow have the uncanny ability to sway and shape people and culture, including those of us in the church.

Feel the Force

When George Lucas first penned the words, "Feel the Force," he could not have known the incredible appeal Star Wars would have on moviegoers worldwide.⁸⁵ Yet strangely enough today, movies as a whole seem to be endowed with similar appeal. So much so, that some, such as Alex Field, say that "film is, for better or worse, the twenty-first century's dominant form of popular literature."⁸⁶ According to John Easton in his article "Reel Scholarship," this is conceivably due to movies being the central medium that embodies the concerns, problems, and preoccupations of a society in which film

⁸⁴ Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts*, 61.

⁸⁵ *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, DVD, wri. and dir. George Lucas, Widescreen, 123. (Beverly Hills: Twentieth Century Fox, 1977).

⁸⁶ Alex Field, *The Hollywood Project: A look into the minds of the makers of spiritually relevant films* (Lake Mary: Relevant Books, 2004), ix.

actually aids a person in negotiating the meaning and experience of life.⁸⁷ To add to this, David Browne in his chapter, "Film, Movies, Meanings," indicates that one of the overlooked reasons why movies have this "pervasive and powerful" appeal is due to their global profile created by their production presence in major cities; and due to movies being increasingly easy to distribute and exhibit on satellite or cable, as well as through video storefronts.⁸⁸ Most recently the proliferation of the Internet makes it possible to stream and download movies legally and illegally.

Some, like Colin McGinn, have sought to understand this "force" movies have on people by trying to understand how the mind interacts with film. In his attempt to understand why people love and are captivated by movies, McGinn has proposed what he calls the "mind-movie problem."⁸⁹ Just as the mind-body problem explains "how conscious experience relates to the physical materials of the body and brain; the mind-movie problem is the problem of explaining how it is that the two-dimensional moving image, as we experience it in a typical feature film, manages to hook our consciousness in the way it does."⁹⁰ In other words, "how do these jumpy splashes of light contrive to strike our mind with such force?"⁹¹

⁸⁷ Quoted in Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph Over Shame* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 3-4.

⁸⁸ David Browne, *Explorations in Theology and Film*, ed. Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 9.

⁸⁹ Colin McGinn, *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact*, 4-5.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁹¹ Ibid.

To solve this so-called riddle about why movies "hook" us, McGinn first asserts that people tend to connect what they see on the screen as three-dimensional representations of something based in reality and not just mere objects and patches of light.⁹² The second assertion McGinn makes in order to explain this enigma of cinema is that people simply "derive pleasure" from movies.⁹³ Why is the screen so pleasurable? McGinn alleges that pleasure is derived from movies because: our mind enjoys being able to "traverse" other realities; movies satisfy our visual curiosity; we experience an inherent pleasure in just looking at films; and movies provide a stimulus that ignites our imagination.⁹⁴

Another suggestion is Hugo Munsterberg's idea of "film mentalism," in which movies are said to "mimic the mind's processes by containing analogues of key psychological functions."⁹⁵ For example a close-up in a movie mimics *attention*; a scene with a flashback mimics *memory*; and a flash-forward in a film mimics *imagination* or *expectation*.⁹⁶ Ultimately, however, perhaps the primary reason that we "Feel the Force" of movies, is because, as McGinn says, "we see ourselves in film."⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid, 44.

⁹³ Ibid, 53.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 68.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Million Dollar Baby

With Hollywood in a seemingly box office slump during the first few years of the new millennium, a new spark was set by the light of a movie called, "The Passion of the Christ" in 2004. With close to \$400 million in domestic sales and more than \$600 million in worldwide sales, Hollywood was reawakened to the fact that if the general populous will not spend money on its movie tickets, then Christians will. As Ted Baehr points out, it's one thing to say that the church has discovered Hollywood, but "more importantly, Hollywood has discovered the church."⁹⁸ According to Baehr, as a result:

Major movie studios today hire Christian publicists to market movies to the 135 million to 165 million people who go to church every week. They write Bible study materials to complement a particular movie for church use. Considering that the average movie audience per week is only 17 million to 29 million, the church is the largest demographic group in the United States and has the potential to make a film a blockbuster, earning more than \$100 million (i.e., *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Passion of the Christ*).⁹⁹

This is not to say that those in the church are only interested in seeing so-called religious films. According to a 2004 study done by George Barna, Christians (Evangelicals) were numbered among the most frequent moviegoers.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the study also showed that the number of movies a typical American watches in one year is greater than the number of times he or she attends church.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ted Baehr, *So You Want to be in Pictures? A Christian Resource for 'Making It' in Hollywood* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 1.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in William D. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*, 39.

¹⁰¹ Christian Examiner Staff Report, "Barna's 2004 research offers encouragement, challenges," *Christian Examiner*, February 2005.

What this means according to a Richard Corliss article in *Time* magazine called, "The Gospel According To Spider-Man," is that Hollywood and the church are not only meeting together "they're also sitting down and breaking bread together."¹⁰² From this unofficial partnership, we see what Adele Reinhartz calls, a "growth in the inventory of mainstream commercial films in which the Bible appears, in roles great and small."¹⁰³

However, this so-called "sitting down together" is not without flaws. As Colleen O'Connor of the *Denver Post* reported with the release of "The Chronicles of Narnia" movie in 2005, executives in Hollywood as well as Evangelical leaders were fighting for the movie's identity to be of God or of fantasy.¹⁰⁴ O'Connor raises the fact that something very serious was at stake in regard to this movie's branding. If the movie is of fantasy, then it appeals to non-Christians who may not want to see a religious film; if the movie is of God, then it may only appeal to Christians alone, which may result in decreased ticket sales, since the overall appeal lacks a wide audience. From observation of the period in which "The Chronicles of Narnia" was released, it's interesting that Hollywood executives and Evangelicals leaders seemed to be playing to each others' sides in order to maximize both their benefits—such joint benefits included financial gain from ticket sales and filled seats as a results of sermons based on the movie.

¹⁰² Richard Corliss, "The Gospel According To Spider-Man," *Time*, August 16, 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,994875,00.html>. (accessed January 11, 2007).

¹⁰³ Adele Reinhartz, *Scripture on the Silver Screen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Colleen O'Connor, "God or fantasy?," *The Denver Post*, November 20 2005, sec. L, 1L .

Of course all this hype from so-called religious or Christian value-based films is a pleasant sound for Hollywood. As Corliss indicates, while the clergy may see all this excitement over these types of films as a possible indicator of revival, "Hollywood sees it as a customer bonanza."¹⁰⁵ The Anschutz Film Group (AFG), the company behind Walden Media and the Narnia movie, had banked on such hype for movies like Narnia that appealed to all audiences. David Weil, president of AFG, stated that "what we're trying to do is tap into a reservoir of interest and desire in certain types of films...and we think the market for those films is underserved at the moment."¹⁰⁶ In the end, moviegoers proved Weil right. Like the blockbuster success of "The Passion of the Christ," Narnia grossed nearly \$300 million in domestic box office sales and more than \$700 million worldwide making it the third-highest-grossing movie in 2005, only to be outdone by the films, "Harry Potter" and "Star Wars."

While movies like Narnia and The Passion are huge hits for both Hollywood and fans, there are some religious and Christian-based movies that don't succeed in terms of the millions expected in ticket sales. One such case is "Evan Almighty," which for many reasons, struck out. Interestingly enough, Fox News reporter Mark Joseph indicated that one of the main reasons this movie was not a hit is because Hollywood did not learn its lesson from The Passion. Lessons like how a movie must be shown to key church leaders early enough for them to not only offer their support, but also to offer their input as well, stating:

¹⁰⁵ Richard Corliss, "The Gospel According To Spider-Man."

¹⁰⁶ Kimberly S. Johnson, "Will 'The Lion' roar?," *The Denver Post*, November 6 2005, sec. K, 8K.

Megachurch pastors and other key leaders, for instance, can influence the moviegoing habits of millions of people, but they will not, as a general rule, recommend a film they themselves have not seen in its totality.¹⁰⁷

If Joseph is correct, then Hollywood may need to adjust its strategy. Of course, Hollywood may decide to stop making movies that appeal to Christians in general. Whether or not this happen is unknown, but what is known is that Hollywood will continue to make movies that bring in the millions.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

If movies are the storytelling media of age, according to Ted Baehr,¹⁰⁸ and if according to Bob Briner, movies are a "big part in how America thinks and in what the world thinks about America"¹⁰⁹ then it is safe to say that one must look into all the possible good, bad, and ugly side-effects movies may have on our culture and on the church. Especially since, as Robert K. Johnston correctly observes, "movies are simply part of contemporary life."¹¹⁰ And as such, Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal would declare that they are "one of the most powerful cultural influences in America."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Mark Joseph, "With Evan Almighty, Hollywood Strikes Out Again In Effort To Appeal To Faith-based Audience," *Fox News*, June 28, 2007, <http://www.foxnews.com:80/story/0,2933,287253,00.html>. (accessed June 29, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Ted Baehr, *So You Want to be in Pictures? A Christian Resource for 'Making It' in Hollywood*, xiii.

¹⁰⁹ Bob Briner, *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 80.

¹¹⁰ Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 21.

¹¹¹ Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal, *ReViewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 11.

Despite these claims, there are those who would argue against movies having a possible "good side." Yet there still exist those, like Alex Field, who label movies as "good" due to the fact that they are, in his opinion, the "critical shakers of culture, especially in terms of spirituality and God."¹¹² Richard Leonard would agree, advocating that movies are a "rich repository of images that celebrate the human spirit and put us in touch with the divine."¹¹³ Although Field and Leonard see the spiritual side of movies, as Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, authors of *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* point out, there are still those who feel that it is the church's job to be the "moral policeman" when it comes to film.¹¹⁴ However, Detweiler and Taylor firmly believe that "a bold, ancient, radical Christ stands on the sidelines of the culture wars, waiting (in the words of Creed) 'With Arms Wide Open,' eager to engage our hearts, our minds, and our culture" using such vehicles as movies.¹¹⁵ Of course, not everyone is ready to embrace movies in this way. In fact, instead of embracing movies, many have shaken their finger in Hollywood's face for its supposed *total* lack of decency. For those eager to do this, Brian Godawa says that in doing so: "Not only do [we] miss the positive values that *do* exist in many movies, but [we] also completely withdraw from culture because of its imperfection...[thus, we stand to] suffer a decreasing capacity to interact redemptively

¹¹² Alex Field, *The Hollywood Project: A look into the minds of the makers of spiritually relevant films*, ix.

¹¹³ Richard Leonard, SJ, *Movies That Matter: Reading Film through the Lens of Faith* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006), xi.

¹¹⁴ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 9.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

with that culture."¹¹⁶ If this is true, and if films really do shape and reflect a range of cultural, economic, religious, and social practices and positions, as Melanie J. Wright claims they do, then we must carve out a space in our minds to see "the good" in movies.¹¹⁷

For as long as there have been movies, there have also been those who would blame Hollywood for our "cultural woes," as Spencer Lewerenz and Barbara Nicolosi of *Act One* would put it.¹¹⁸ As directors of this non-profit organization aimed at training Christians to be successful Hollywood writers and executives, they are calling for this entire notion of "blaming Hollywood" to be abandoned, since according to them, this only pushes Hollywood further away.¹¹⁹ While some may argue that pushing Hollywood away is of no loss to the church, the negative result is: "the farther Hollywood is from us, the less influence we have on our culture."¹²⁰ Additionally, Lewerenz and Nicolosi refer to other negative results such as the poor witness this is for the church and how it creates a distorted image of who Christians are in the eyes of Hollywood.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 13.

¹¹⁷ Melanie J. Wright, *Religion and Film: An Introduction* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 1.

¹¹⁸ Spencer Lewerenz and Barbara Nicolosi, *Behind the Screen: Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film, and Culture*, ed. Spencer Lewerenz and Barbara Nicolosi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 8-9.

As valid and valiant as these remarks are, it must be said that there is also a "bad side" to all this movie magic. For one, while most motion picture studios now acknowledge the role movies play in influencing culture and how films can be used to promote Christian values, they also seem equally willing to create films that do not promote Christian values. Consequently, this implies that studios are only willing to produce so-called *spiritual films* that are powerful and thought-provoking as long as these films bring in revenue.¹²² Quentin J. Schultze does more than just simply imply that this is commonly the case in Hollywood, he emphatically states that: "The entertainment industry appears to forego conscience in favor of the almighty dollar, to shelve shalom in favor of ego and self-interest."¹²³

A second issue we must address is how others are using movies to inspire and instigate the general populous into actions regarding social issues, whether they are "Christian" or not. One such individual is Jeff Skoll, who used his wealth from being the first president of eBay to become a philanthropist and start the independent movie company *Participant Productions*. Skoll created this film studio because he sees movies as an opportunity to use entertainment to drive people into getting involved with social or political issues, such as global warming, the oil industry, and political corruption.¹²⁴ Skoll

¹²² A letter from Elliot Wallach of Edify Media, Promoters of Fox Faith, a division of Twentieth Century Fox, to church ministry leaders. This letter was then proceeded by a postcard from Twentieth Century Fox, promoting two of their DVDs based on "Conversations with God," by Neale Donald Walsch and Deepak Chopra's "How to Know God."

¹²³ Quentin J. Schultze, *Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 112.

¹²⁴ Ashley Jude Collie, "Moving Pictures," *United Hemispheres*, July, 2006, 92.

says, "My vision was to create a company that could make a difference in major world issues by using compelling entertainments as a means [and] with each film, we [can] create a social-action campaign where we partner with social-sector organizations."¹²⁵ While social issues are important and often seemed to be overlooked by Evangelicals, Skoll is just a minor example of the extent some *have* and *will* take to push their own agendas onto the public, knowing full well the power of film.

The third issue that could be viewed as the "bad" part of film is how some in the secular community equally abhor film, as some Christians do, for its seeming lack of good values. This was brought to light in a newspaper article written by a high school English teacher who had to defend to his students his decision not to allow his four-year old son to watch movies like "Shrek."¹²⁶ What concerned this teacher was how movies like "Shrek" were blending adult material into children's films, which to him was fundamentally wrong.¹²⁷ Reflecting on this same "bad side" of movies was a piece of literature from *Focus on the Family*. From one of its weekly "Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family Bulletin," Bob Waliszewski spoke out against the lack of discernment in young Christians today to not see the apparent harm that can come from subjecting oneself to certain films with adult elements.¹²⁸ In this bulletin insert, Waliszewski

¹²⁵ Ibid, 94.

¹²⁶ Michael P. Mazenko, "Worms and butterflies - or "Shrek"?", *The Denver Post*, September 10 2006, sec. E, 1E.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Bob Waliszewski, ""But It's Just One Little Scene!"," *Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family Bulletin* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, April 2007) vol. 20, no. 3.

argues: "Why make guarding our hearts tougher by ingesting entertainment that arouses passion and applauds sexual behavior that God sees as damaging?"¹²⁹ Of course, this is not to say that *Focus on the Family* is totally against movies. On the contrary, through its website "Plugged In Online," Focus promotes awareness and responsible viewing through its reviews, although some Christians criticize these reviews as being too legalistic.¹³⁰

A final observation on the "bad side" of movies is the concern of relevancy. Christian author and leader Len Sweet is very uneasy about churches confusing relevance and recency with an example of recency being the use of movies in the church.¹³¹ To Sweet, "we have to be in touch with the culture but in tune with the Spirit."¹³² These are just a few apprehensions regarding the "bad side" of movies.

We will now close this section by looking at the "ugly side" of movies and their so-called "magic." Here, the "ugly side" of film is brought out by the strong reactions of both Christian and secular authors, who vehemently altercation that movies—as well as other electronic forms of media—are adversely shaping and damaging our culture. For scholar and award-winning author Neal Gabler of *Life: The Movie*: "Perhaps the single most intense pleasure of movie-going is this non-aesthetic one of escaping from the responsibilities of having the proper responses required of us in our official (school)

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Focus on the Family, "Home Page," *Plugged In Online*, 2007, <http://www.pluggedinonline.com> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹³¹ Peter J. Walker with Tyler Clark, "Missing the Point?," *Relevant*, July-August, 2006, 74.

¹³² Ibid.

culture...It's the feeling of freedom from respectability we have always enjoyed at the movies...[T]hey are stripped of cultural values."¹³³ Of course, Gabler is not the only one to proclaim this sentiment. Others, such as Neil Postman in his soon-to-be classic, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, warn of the harmful effects show business (also referred to as visual entertainment) is having on public discourse and public life.¹³⁴

Yet these two authors are not alone in their notice of how media, such as movies, have far-reaching effects in shaping society. As Ted Baehr and Pat Boone reveal in their book, *The Culture-Wise Family*, Hollywood is no longer a geographic place, rather it is an entertainment industry that reaches the world.¹³⁵ Baehr and Boone write: "Clearly, what happens in Hollywood does not stay in Hollywood," as evident in how people imitate a star's dress, speech, and conduct.¹³⁶ As alarming as that is to them, what is even more disturbing is how many Christians and Christian leaders seem totally ignorant of how persuasive and powerful the mass media of entertainment can be on the church and on our culture in terms of its impact on how we view ethical weight and moral evaluation.¹³⁷

¹³³ Quote from Pauline Kael in Neal Gabler, *Life: The Movie* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 31.

¹³⁴ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 5ff.

¹³⁵ Ted Baehr and Pat Boone, *The Culture-Wise Family* (Venture: Regal Books, 2007), 18.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 19.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

From this concern, we move to criticism of electronic media forms in general, such as movies discussed in Shane Hipps' book, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church*. Here, Hipps unequivocally bares his conviction that media, like movies regardless of content, are "extremely powerful forces that cause changes in our faith, theology, culture, and ultimately the church."¹³⁸ While this author's arguments seem repetitive and reactionary in nature, we must look seriously at these charges, especially since he asserts that electronic media can make several foundational Christian ideals—such as our belief in the metanarrative, our belief that conversion to Christ is a one-time event, the role of abstract propositional faith, and the full impact of the Apostle Paul's letters—entirely obsolete.¹³⁹ Shane also cautions against the dangers of using modern media in churches implying that: "Despite these churches' best intentions to retain the same message, these new worship forms actually nurture certain aspects of postmodern thinking."¹⁴⁰ Thus, we can deduce from his comments that the reason churches take such risks at using media, such as movies, is to appear relevant.¹⁴¹ To this end, Hipps correctly admonishes that:

Relevance does not come simply from imitating culture or mirroring the techniques of Hollywood and Madison Avenue. It does not depend upon the adoption of electronic hardware in worship. Relevance is derived from experimenting with

¹³⁸ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 82.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 82.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 153.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 154.

authentic and indigenous practices that emerge from the gift mix of a particular congregation for a local community.¹⁴²

This statement epitomizes the "ugly side" of movies, for movies can never substitute as objects of relevance and authenticity over the community of God and His Word, no matter how much "magic" they seem to hold.

Movies as Life-Changers

Can a movie really change a person's life? According to many Christian and non-Christian authors, it can. Added to their voice is the movie industry itself, which recognizes this claim as true. In fact, during the past few years, pastors have been inundated with letters, kits, posters, Bible study materials, and actual sermons sponsored by the studios themselves—all of this provided with advice on how to use their particular new movie as a *life-changer*. To aid them in their endeavors, companies like Outreach Media Group¹⁴³ and its affiliate SermonCentral.com,¹⁴⁴ as well as other websites such as Movie Ministry.com¹⁴⁵ and SermonSpice.com,¹⁴⁶ have been working together to allow for free downloads of movie clips to go along with their suggested sermons and

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Outreach Media Group, "Outreach: Church communication and marketing tools," *Outreach*, 2007, <http://www.outreach.com/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹⁴⁴ Outreach Web Network, "SermonCentral.com: Free Sermons, Illustrations and Outlines," *SermonCentral.com*, 2007, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹⁴⁵ MovieMinistry.com, "Movie Ministry," *MovieMinistry*, 2007, <http://www.movieministry.com/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹⁴⁶ Sermonspice.com, "Sermonspice – Give your message some motion," *Sermonspice.com*, 2007, <http://www.sermonspice.com/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

materials. Example movie clips have recently come from films like: "Arctic Tale," "Evan Almighty," "The Nativity Story," "Rocky Balboa," and "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." Along with providing these licensed movie clips, studios have also worked with Christian publicity companies, such as Grace Hill Media¹⁴⁷ and Motive,¹⁴⁸ to promote the pre-screening of their movies to pastors and other ministry leaders, in an effort to allow them to see the movie and hopefully promote it to their respected churches and ministries. In addition to wanting pastors to promote their movies, studios have had a representative on hand at the end of these pre-screenings to gather feedback, which they claimed would be taken into consideration. From observation and experience, the feedback offered has never changed the final film. Therefore, it is certainly valid to question whether or not this indicates some sort of ploy to give the appearance that studios care and are ready to listen, while in actuality they are not.

Regardless of our skepticism, the reality is that many see movies as *life-changers*. Of course, some studies, such as the one conducted by Barna shortly after the release of *The Passion* in 2004 showed mixed results that could be interpreted as *in-favor* or *against* the statement that movies affect a person's life.¹⁴⁹ Some of the indicated results include:

¹⁴⁷ Grace Hill Media, "GRACE HILL MEDIA," *Grace Hill Media*, 2007, <http://www.gracehillmedia.com/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ Motive Entertainment, "MOTIVE MARKETING," *Motive*, 2005, <http://www.moviemarketing.biz/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

¹⁴⁹ George Barna, "New Survey Examines The Impact Of Gibson's "passion" Movie," *The Barna Group*, July 10, 2004, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=167/> (accessed August 17, 2007).

16% of viewers said the movie affected their religious beliefs; 18% of viewers said the movie affected their religious behavior; 1 out of 10 viewers said they changed some aspect of their religious beliefs or practices in response to the movie; and less than one-tenth of one percent of viewers made a profession of faith, despite marketing efforts claiming this as one of the "greatest evangelical tools" ever.¹⁵⁰ The last result potentially indicates that there were other factors not taken into account by this study—factors that could have shown how the depiction of strong graphic violence had an effect on the audience possibly causing a distraction that might have deterred a confessional response. With that said, Barna's study about *The Passion* concluded by saying that these results do "not negate the power of the movie or the value of the message it sent...[the movie did transform] people lives...with about 13 million adults [who] changed some aspect of their typical religious behavior...and about 11 million people [who] altered some pre-existing religious beliefs because of the content of that film."¹⁵¹

The personal opinions and testimonies of real-life people add weight to these statistical numbers because so many people bear witness that movies have played a huge role in changing their lives and suggest that movies can do the same for others. Gareth Higgins, author of *How Movies Helped Save My Soul*, proclaims: "Film should be treated with the same respect as church or poison, for it can change your life."¹⁵² In *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies*, Roy M. Anker expresses that just as film catches

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Gareth Higgins, *How Movies Helped Save My Soul: Finding Spiritual Fingerprints in Culturally Significant Films* (Lake Mary: Relevant Books, 2003), xix.

light, so people can catch light and see God in the movies.¹⁵³ Bob Briner openly admits in *Roaring Lambs* that movies have made him a better person.¹⁵⁴ And then there are those who create books like *Devotionals for Guys Who like Movies*, which is exactly what it says it is—a daily devotional that takes spiritual principles and matches them to movies that embody these principles all for the sake of making a *life-changing* difference in the life of some man reading it.¹⁵⁵ In line with this, there are Christians like Edward McNulty, who created a prayer guide using movies because, like so many others, he truly "believe[s] that...films help us to understand a little better what it means to be a human being and...to see a little more clearly the emerging kingdom of God."¹⁵⁶ It should be noted that most of these authors who profess how movies can be *life-changers* all give countless examples of films that either worked to change their own lives or films they believe can work to change the life of another.

Of course, it's not just Christians or religious people who boldly declare their fondness for film. There are those from the secular and academic community who equally attest to movies as being *life-changers*. One such person is Fulbright scholar and psychotherapist Dr. Maria Grace who, in her work *Reel Fulfillment* makes a clinical case

¹⁵³ Roy M. Anker, *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2004), 1.

¹⁵⁴ Bob Briner, *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World*, 77.

¹⁵⁵ Jeff Anderson and Chuck Gartman, *Devotionals for Guys Who like Movies: Daily Devotions Inspired by Classic Movie Scenes* (Nashville: AnderKamp Publishing, 2002), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Edward McNulty, *Praying the Movies: Daily Meditations from Classic Films* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001), ix.

that movies can transform a person's life and offer them a path to happiness. This is because in her own professional opinion, movies are "powerful teachers, guides, and healers because they provide personal growth experiences that fulfill three essential needs: safety, privacy, and control."¹⁵⁷ Some, like professor of philosophy Colin McGinn, go as far as comparing the cinema to the church, stating that "movie houses and churches are not dissimilar [for both] tell of a world beyond and give off an aura of the supernatural."¹⁵⁸ It is because of this McGinn pleads, that movies have the power to give a person an almost conversion-like experience.¹⁵⁹

If movies really are *life-changers*, then it is natural to see them as tools for evangelism. Yet, Christian scholars like Francis Schaeffer would have contended with those who would simply see this as an art form and a mere vehicle for that purpose.¹⁶⁰

Echoing Schaeffer's words is poet and writer Steve Turner, who said:

It is therefore wrong for Christians to think that if only we could employ the most powerful arts and media available today we could bring about conversions on a scale never seen before. When Christians think of [movies] as something that can be used to win the world to Christ, they create an unrealistic expectation of the arts and put unfair pressure on artists.¹⁶¹

Despite both Schaeffer's and Turner's cautioning words, it is not unfair or unrealistic to think that one *can* use movies for the purpose of evangelism. For if

¹⁵⁷ Maria Grace, *Reel Fulfillment: A 12-Step Plan for Transforming Your Life through Movies* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2006), xv.

¹⁵⁸ Colin McGinn, *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact*, 78.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 61.

¹⁶¹ Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts*, 49.

theologians and biblical scholars are correct in interpreting the life and teachings of Christ that advocate *going* and *starting* where the people are then shouldn't we, on certain occasions, *start* with movies? Especially since, as Turner himself points out, our culture knows "more movie plots than Bible stories."¹⁶² Indeed, as Peter Malone and Rose Pacatte point out, "we are living in a movie culture."¹⁶³ Thus, as Briner relates, "movies can be both an important mission field and an important vehicle for the gospel message."¹⁶⁴

If seeing movies as *life-changing* tools for evangelism wasn't challenging enough, Craig Detweiler begs us to also see them as opportunities to build bridges with those in Hollywood, possibly promoting *life-change* for them as well. Using the example of *The Passion*, Craig offers these lurid words:

The Passion was a brilliant movie, but for the Christian community, it was a missed opportunity. As followers of Christ, we should have used the controversy as a chance to better understand the Hollywood community and to build bridges with them. Instead, we used it as another tool in the culture war. We cannot afford to miss another such opportunity. Christians must gain a better grasp of history, particularly Hollywood's prickly experience with American politics. We need to understand that Hollywood doesn't have a problem with Jesus; they have a problem with Jesus' people—or more accurately, with Jesus' people who subscribe to Republican politics. We need to understand that, for Hollywood's primarily Jewish community, every protest, boycott, or picket awakens ugly visions from the political past. When Christians talk boycott, Hollywood hears pogrom.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid, 38.

¹⁶³ Peter Malone and Rose Pacatte, *Lights, Camera...Faith! A Movie Lectionary - Cycle A: A Movie Lover's Guide to Scripture* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2001), vii.

¹⁶⁴ Bob Briner, *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World*, 94.

¹⁶⁵ Craig Detweiler, "Opportunity Lost," *Behind the Screen: Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film, and Culture*, ed. Spencer Lewerenz and Barbara Nicolosi, 27.

If anything, following such advise to "build bridges" with those in the Hollywood community will at least allow us to discover where Christ is active in our culture, as Richard Leonard would encourage us to do; for as Leonard would charge, we cannot evangelize a culture if we do not speak its language.¹⁶⁶ And that language is learned from powerful media forms like movies.¹⁶⁷ For movies truly are *life-changers*.

Movies as Theological Collaborators

Just as movies can be classified as *life-changers*, so they can also be identified for their role as *theological collaborators*. What this means is that movies can work and cooperate with those who teach theology either formally or informally, in a joint-effort attempt of sharing and explaining biblical truth. For if Detweiler and Taylor are correct in stating that people "don't lose it at the movies but find it," then perhaps they can find biblical truth in movies as well.¹⁶⁸

In looking at the theologians of our day, many, like Robert Jewett, have mobilized movies into *theological collaborators*. In his two books, *Saint Paul at the Movies* and *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies*, Jewett has strived to create what he calls a dialogue between the Apostle Paul and his letters, as well as touch on what Paul wrote about grace and shame. To Jewett, movies are the perfect device for teaching theology, for they provide an "interpretive arch" between the biblical text and the situations we find

¹⁶⁶ Richard Leonard, SJ, *Movies That Matter: Reading Film through the Lens of Faith*, xii.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*, 155.

ourselves facing in the modern world.¹⁶⁹ This does not mean that Jewett simply sees movies as "illustrations" of Pauline truth, but rather he sees them as respectable accomplices in revealing the truth of Scripture that stands on its own.¹⁷⁰

For theologian Robert K. Johnston, movies have not only proven to be a force for healing, but also a force for insight as well.¹⁷¹ To Johnston, "the power of film can change lives and communicate truth; it can reveal and redeem"¹⁷² and he offers the example of a Swiss man who, while working in a Zurich bank, found a ledger documenting Jewish-owned property stolen by Nazis in World War II. When pondering what to do, the man recalled how in "Schindler's List," Schindler did something despite the risks. In the end, his actions forced the banks to reach a settlement with Holocaust survivors and their families, totaling one and a quarter billion dollars.¹⁷³ This, Johnston exclaims, "Is the power of film."¹⁷⁴ Johnston later went on to write *Useless Beauty: Ecclesiastes through the Lens of Contemporary Film*, still holding to his belief that "contemporary film, rather than being a deterrent to faith, can provide the spectacles, the eyeglasses, to clarify our vision as we look at Ecclesiastes' enigmatic text."¹⁷⁵ He then

¹⁶⁹ Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with American Culture*, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷¹ Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, 24.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 25-26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 26.

¹⁷⁵ Robert K. Johnston, *Useless Beauty: Ecclesiastes through the Lens of Contemporary Film* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 21.

was able to co-author a book with his wife Catherine M. Barsotti who teaches theology at a Latin ministry training center in Los Angeles. Together, they went on to say this about theology and the part movies play: "Theology is being portrayed in and will be retained from the movies we [all] see each week at the Cineplex...[for] God is present in the movies for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear"¹⁷⁶

Other theologians, such as Bryan P. Stone in his book, *Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema*, somewhat emulate Johnston's writings in saying that theology is not merely the study of Scripture, but also the study of worldly context.¹⁷⁷ By assigning theology with dual requirements, Stone makes the case that "the cinema can be an important dialogue partner for Christians who are interested in thinking seriously about their faith" [especially since] the cinema is a regular and "amazing source of revelation about ourselves and our world."¹⁷⁸ To this end, some like Adele Reinhartz have gone as far as to develop an entire twelve-part systematic course on the Bible using movies.¹⁷⁹

All this talk about using movies to teach biblical truths and principles has not been without its fair share of criticism and skepticism. Some people, such as Clive Marsh, who are in favor of using films as *theological collaborators*, are also concerned about the consequences of pairing movies with theology; two of the concerns are: (1) that

¹⁷⁶ Catherine M. Barsotti and Robert K. Johnston, *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 12.

¹⁷⁷ Bryan P. Stone, *Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 4.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Adele Reinhartz, *Scripture on the Silver Screen*, 4.

using movies in this way might be short-lived; and (2) it might appear as though one is desperately trying to make theology look relevant.¹⁸⁰ Brian Godawa's unease comes from the fact that although movies can teach biblical truths or principles, they can also introduce and teach other worldviews.¹⁸¹ Godawa is also uneasy about how Hollywood seems to portray Christians or Christianity in a very negative light, especially when films characterize Christians as psychotic or as serial killers.¹⁸²

If a movie is strictly a form of entertainment, then it would be safe to assume that purists like the great A.W. Tozer would be opposed to making movies into *theological collaborators*. In the book, *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment*, a selected collection of his writings, Tozer essentially calls the use of entertainment in teaching theological truths as a copout—or, as he would describe it, an attempt to make biblical truth more palatable by spicing it up with "carnal amusements filched from the unbelieving world."¹⁸³ To Tozer, this is nothing more than a religious gimmick.¹⁸⁴

Christians, of course, are not the only ones calling into question the idea of using movies to teach biblical truths. There are those in Hollywood and in the secular press that have either ridiculed such practice or have seen it as nothing more than Godsploitation

¹⁸⁰ Clive Marsh. *Explorations in Theology and Film*, 33.

¹⁸¹ Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment*, 108ff.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 131ff.

¹⁸³ A.W. Tozer, *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment*, ed. James L. Snyder (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, Inc, 1997), 153.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

gone awry.¹⁸⁵ An example of the former was featured in an article Time magazine called "Holy-Wood Or Bust." With nothing more than a list of movie titles and their plots, this article made mockery-fun of various Christian websites for using film to teach what the author typecasts as an over-the-top Christian "lesson," as seen in the sample below:

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY

PLOT A rogue CIA agent tries to recover his memory before he is killed.

LESSON "Since getting amnesia, he has been 'Bourne again' ... The search for his identity is not so much about self-illumination as it is about atoning for sins he can't remember committing." – hollywoodjesus.com¹⁸⁶

This certainly isn't the only illustration of the press poking fun at Christians for applying movies in this way. Another Time article starts off with, "And on the seventh day, they caught a movie."¹⁸⁷ This same column goes on to talk about how successful films, like *The Passion*, promote this type of Godsploitation. Despite such criticism and concern from both Christian and non-Christian sources, it is evident by the plethora of books that relate the silver screen to Scripture that movies as *theological collaborators* are here to stay, as long as there are films and Christian who see meaning in them.

¹⁸⁵ *Godsploitation* is a word commonly used to describe a poorly made movie with an overtly religious or spiritual theme.

¹⁸⁶ Carolina A. Miranda, "Holy-wood Or Bust," *Time*, August 16, 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,994876,00.html>. (accessed August 20, 2007).

¹⁸⁷ Rebecca Winters Keegan, "Hooray For Holy-wood," *Time*, November 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1558295,00.html>. (accessed August 20, 2007).

Movies as Technological Tools

To actually display a movie or movie clip, in a setting like a church, requires the use of technology. This qualifies movies as *technological tools* and, as such, creates a unique set of issues and interests being used in this environment. For example, in a 2002 and 2003 survey of Michigan churches, Quentin Schultz reported that movie clips made up a small percentage of the various types of media being used in weekly church services—only 4% at that time.¹⁸⁸ From his own observations, Schultz was not only worried about movie clips not being correctly tied to the biblical text but he was also concerned that this type of technology was being used just for technology sake.¹⁸⁹ Schultz is not alone in his fears. As John P. Jewell affirms in his book, *New Tools for a New Century*:

Technology provides us with terrific new tools for ministry. These tools are not the main point, but are intended to serve the main point, namely our life together in the family of faith. Technology is a wonderful servant, but it is also a terrible master. Technology in the service of ministry will give us new ways to communicate, to reach out, and even to worship. The crucial point is ministry. If technological resources are used simply to produce a tech show or to entertain ourselves, we simply build another form of the golden calf.¹⁹⁰

Other than these fears, perhaps a more practical apprehension is the actual costs involved in properly employing such technology in churches. Coupled with this factor Shane Hipps considers the use of technology as just one way the church is attempting to appear relevant, to which he says:

¹⁸⁸ Quentin J. Schultze, *High-Tech Worship? Using Presentational Technologies Wisely* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 106.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁹⁰ John P. Jewell, *New Tools for a New Century: First Steps in Equipping Your Church for the Digital Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 59.

Relevance is a moving target that has never been more difficult or confusing to achieve. There is no other period in church history when relevance has cost so much time and money. And this kind of technology is only getting more expensive. Most congregations simply cannot afford these things, but they are encouraged to seek them as means to an evangelistic end.¹⁹¹

While one can easily agree with Hipps' logic of the "moving target" and the pressure placed on churches to acquire this type of technology, most technology experts would disagree with his statement on its rising costs. The fact is, with some exceptions, technology is always getting less expensive *not* more expensive. However, this may be a moot point to many churches, especially since even at the lower-end, the technology needed and the funds to secure it may still be out of reach for many small churches today. But if someone is in the market to purchase the technology needed to display a movie or movie clip in a church, there is no shortage of advertisements and articles seeking to woo buyers. Just the fact that we have a magazine called, "Church Production," which is totally devoted to articles like, "Have You Seen the Light?"¹⁹² and ads entitled, "Tools for the Visual Worshiper,"¹⁹³ signals a trend like no other in the life of the church.

Costs aside, there are those who would view all technology, for whatever purpose it serves, as "inherently evil."¹⁹⁴ This would then indirectly imply that movie clips are "inherently evil" since they are technology-dependant. This type of thinking, however, is

¹⁹¹ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church*, 154.

¹⁹² Bennett Liles, "Have You Seen the Light?," *Church Production Magazine*, August, 2007, 40.

¹⁹³ Ad by Roland, "Tools for the Visual Worshiper," *Church Production Magazine*, August, 2007, 41.

¹⁹⁴ Quentin J. Schultze, *Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media*, 113.

flawed; for as Quentin Schultze indicates, we should not associate media technologies with God or the devil, since they are actually reflections of our own "mixed motives."¹⁹⁵ Of course, there are those on the other side as Neil Postman tells, who would view all technologies as their "staunch friend."¹⁹⁶ Despite this observation, Postman himself sees technology as "both friend and enemy."¹⁹⁷ Yet, neither view is needed in terms of using technology like movie clips for ministry; for as John P. Jewell in his book *Wired for Ministry* reveals, ministry and technology should work in partnership, with ministry coming first, and technology coming next.¹⁹⁸

With proper viewpoint in hand and the financial backing to properly equip a church, another consideration to account for is how technology is constantly changing, causing the need to always learn new things. In a church or other ministry, this will call for the need of a team, not an individual, to be able to understand and properly employ such changes in technology. For Jewell this "need for collaboration and teamwork is one of the advantages of the new technologies [especially since] no one person can do it all."¹⁹⁹ To help such teams, one can easily find books specifically dedicated to their selection and training. Two such examples are: *The Wired Church* and *Media Ministry*

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xii.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ John P. Jewell, *Wired for Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 123.

¹⁹⁹ John P. Jewell, *New Tools for a New Century: First Steps in Equipping Your Church for the Digital Revolution*, 63.

Made Easy, both of which describe practical ways to develop a strong technological media team.

Along with the challenge of finding and training a team to work with technology, is the challenge of being able to handle all the preparation work required. As Jewell states, "The use of these new tools for enhancing our worship experience requires advance planning and production of materials."²⁰⁰ To that end, Tim Eason suggests the following "Three P's of Implementing Media," which are: Planning, Patience, and Practice.²⁰¹

The final challenge that technology offers, and perhaps its greatest, is with the audience itself. A church could either have an audience that will uncritically, irresponsibly, and without discernment adopt any and every new technology, as Schultze observes,²⁰² or a church could have an audience that cannot understand the need for technology at all, declaring as Jewell fears: "'We don't need none of that newfangled computer stuff around here.'"²⁰³ For most churches, the reality is likely somewhere in the middle. With this in mind, Jewell makes it clear that one needs to make sure he or she

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy: A Practical Guide to Visual Communication* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 62-63.

²⁰² Quentin J. Schultze, *Habits of the High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 16-17.

²⁰³ John P. Jewell, *Wired for Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church*, 33.

prepares their viewers so that any technology introduced will not surprise or dismay them.²⁰⁴

If motive, viewpoint, costs, and challenges do not present a barrier to using technology for one's preaching ministry, there is one final thing to consider: its novelty. In their book, *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts*, Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin wonder if the novelty of technology is just going to wear off and if the only thing captivating us is the fact that it is being done.²⁰⁵ To describe what they mean, they compare the reaction some have to a woman preaching, saying: "We are scarcely interested in whether it is done well, it is the fact that it is done at all that amazes us."²⁰⁶ Whether or not technology, specifically its use of showing movies in ministry, will ever wear off or fade away is anyone's guess. One can only assume that when movies no longer function as adequate tools to facilitate messages, that their true nature will be revealed as whether they are a novelty or not. Until then, movies remain as *technological tools* for the preaching ministry.

Movies as Sermonic Support

As we said in the beginning of this chapter, there is very limited information on the practical use of movie clips in the development and delivery of an expository sermon. What little information *is* in existence, is usually devoted to preaching in general and is

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin, *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 156.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

often applied to multimedia as a whole. Therefore, in this final section of our literary review, we will not only report that information, but we will seek to apply the principles taught, in hopes of describing some effective methods and practices for using movie clips to support expository preaching. Whatever knowledge gleaned from doing this will then be used, at least in part, in the project design. The project design is this author's attempt at initiating a definitive work on the effective methods and practices for using movie clips in expository preaching, which has yet to be properly accounted for by the current preaching literature.

The Function of Movie Clips

A movie clip essentially functions as one type of support material and in many ways operates as a visual illustration. As Haddon Robinson says, "Supporting material is to the outline what skin is to bones or walls are to the frame of a house."²⁰⁷ Basically, support material is the material outside of the biblical material that: supports, reinforces, restates, specifies, amplifies, applies, enhances, explains, clarifies, conveys, proves, relates, validates, or demonstrates an idea. In reality, a well-chosen and well-placed movie clip should hold to the same qualities as conventional illustrations and should operate in like manner. As Bryan Chapel said in *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*:

Illustrations are not supplemental to good exposition; they are a necessary form of exposition in which biblical truths are explained to the emotions and the will as well as to the intellect. Illustrations will not allow mere head knowledge. They exegete Scripture in the terms of human experience to create a whole-person

²⁰⁷ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 140.

understanding of God's Word. By framing biblical truths in the world in which we live and move and have our being, illustrations unite our personalities, our pasts, our presents, our affections, our fears, our frustrations, our hopes, our hearts, our minds, and our souls in the understanding of that which is divine. They are integral to effective preaching, not merely because they may entertain or clarify, but because they expand and deepen the applications the mind and heart can make.²⁰⁸

Do Movie Clips Detract From Oral Proclamation?

Despite this function movie clips can serve, there are those who would argue that this form of technology can take something away from the oral proclamation of the Word. Perhaps this is a reflection of media guru Marshall McLuhan's dictum uttered in the 1960's: "the medium is the message."²⁰⁹ Others, such as Andrew Careaga, author of *eMinistry*, actually see electronic media as tools to revitalize the oral tradition of the early church.²¹⁰ Yet one of the strongest voices to echo McLuhan is author and Mennonite pastor Shane Hipps. In a recent interview in *Leadership* journal addressing "The Tech Effect," Hipps made the following comments:

Media [tools] are not neutral [they] are messages in themselves, and every single medium you use carries a different message embodied in it. I occasionally use visual media and technology as a crutch to help keep what I'm saying interesting [but] words are absolutely the most effective medium. If I need to evoke an emotional visceral response, images work better. But you have to realize that once you use an image, you risk becoming manipulative...I believe certain technologies preclude incarnational ministry...God came embodied in Jesus. He didn't just

²⁰⁸ Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 14-15.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *Digital Storytellers: The Art of Communicating the Gospel in Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 100.

²¹⁰ Andrew Careaga, *eMinistry: Connecting with the Net Generation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 117.

project his likeness. Embodiment means human physical touch; presence. And there are certain technologies that disembody us, like video.²¹¹

This outlook also seems to be shared with other pastors who resist the trend of using movie clips to augment oral proclamation; to them, "preaching [is] a sacred act that carries power in the spoken word, person to person, apart from 'the machine.'"²¹² To these and other preachers, conceivably the only form of technology they will accept as complementary to oral proclamation, is radio. As Jolyon P. Mitchell suggests, "Preaching has more obvious parallels with speech radio than with either film or television, for at the heart of both preaching and speech radio is the spoken word."²¹³

All of this fuss over other media taking over or detracting from the spoken word is due to confusion, as Len Wilson and Jason Moore claim, regarding the Word of God and the written word or oral word.²¹⁴ As they report: "The Word is different from the word. The Gospel of John tells us that the Word is eternal, which means it is not contained within a particular communication system. This means that no single communication system is more holy than another."²¹⁵ Finally, there are those who feel they don't need to use something visual like movie clips in their communication pondering: "Aren't words good enough?" Duane Litfin's answer to that question is:

²¹¹ A Leadership Interview, "The Tech Effect," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 30-31.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

²¹³ Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking: Radio and the Renaissance of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 219.

²¹⁴ Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *Digital Storytellers: The Art of Communicating the Gospel in Worship*, 99.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

"[O]ften they are not. We need to make our ideas visual as well as verbalize them, thus acknowledging the wisdom of Proverbs 20:12: "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made both of them" (NASB)."²¹⁶

Objections to Using Movie Clips in Preaching

In addition to the fear of movie clips detracting from oral proclamation, there are other objections to using them in preaching. To this point, other than contending with Philistines and those preachers troubled with ennui, movie clips have been met with either skepticism or partial-acceptance. Calvin Miller, who is known by many as both a preaching professor and prolific author, is concerned about the recent trend in preaching that "makes preachers more interesting but less vital."²¹⁷ According to Miller:

Preaching is getting more creative, but it is often fluffy and vaporous. Real textual exposition often finds itself coming in a distant second to film clips and drama clubs.²¹⁸

Presumably, more vocal and direct than Miller is homiletics professor Jeffrey Arthurs. In a class handout Arthurs states: "While I have seen movie clips used well in sermons, I have more often seen them used poorly; therefore, I urge caution."²¹⁹ Arthurs then gives four reasons why he urges caution. His first reason is technical. Arthurs says that such things like the cueing of DVDs is often done poorly and "needs to be done

²¹⁶ Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 221.

²¹⁷ Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 17.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Jeffrey Arthurs, "The Use of Movie Clips in Preaching" (South Hamilton: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2005, handout).

seamlessly to avoid communication breakdown."²²⁰ Another technical concern is the constant need to upgrade and buy expensive equipment. The second reason why Arthurs urges caution when using movie clips deals with rhetoric. By this he means: the challenge of showing scenes from their context; movie clips not being specific enough to illustrate a point; and how watching a movie is vastly different from listening to a sermon in that one is visual and private and the other is aural and communal.²²¹ The third reason for caution provided by Arthurs is pastoral and the concern that by showing a movie clip, the preacher gives "tacit approval to the entire movie and perhaps to the entire movie industry."²²² Another negative side-effect that pastors should be concerned about, according to Arthurs, is that it may lead younger Christians astray, especially since preachers ought to be "examples of speech, life, love, faith, and purity."²²³ The final reason Arthurs is cautious about the use of movie clips in preaching is theologically based. To Arthurs, because a sermon is essentially an act of worship and exists for the glory of God and a movie is an act of entertainment and exists for the amusement of a spectator, he concludes that "using movies in preaching may be an ecclesiological oxymoron."²²⁴ All of this is not to say that Arthurs is totally against using movie clips. If anything, he has discovered that they work very well as "objects of discussion," which

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

then removes many of his concerns since they can then be discussed and critiqued.²²⁵ To this, Arthur concludes by saying that, "movie clips can be used to great advantage in teaching and discussion-oriented venues, [especially since] movies are the lingua franca of our day."²²⁶

Validation for the Use of Movie Clips in Preaching

When John Stott wrote *Between Two Worlds*, he was calling on communicators to build bridges that would start with *what* people know and *where* people are and then through preaching, lead them to the relevancy of truth found in God's Word.²²⁷ Of course, many years have passed, but the idea of starting with *what* people know and *where* people are, continues—and it is this idea that serves as one of the validations for using movie clips in preaching. In the same Leadership journal article, "The Tech Effect," Jarrett Stevens, a minister at North Point Community, which is one of the largest and fastest growing churches in America, had this to say when it comes to technologies such as movie clips in preaching: "Using technology does not mean the church is accommodating or succumbing to the culture. It's respecting where people are at and where they're coming from. People come to church from an image and media driven culture."²²⁸ Speaking to this fear of accommodating and succumbing to culture, Peter

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 135ff.

²²⁸ A Leadership Interview, "The Tech Effect," 31.

Fraser and Vernon Neal argue: "For too long we Christians have feared the corrosive influence of film and so avoided approaching it thoughtfully. We need to shift to the offensive and intentionally discuss film as a way to illustrate and apply truth."²²⁹

Ironically enough, David Henderson—who primarily sees movies as entertainment—also sees movies as one way of finding "common ground."²³⁰ In his own words about preaching and teaching God's truth, he states: "Mentioning something you saw on TV or quoting from a movie just out at the theaters can create a point of identification for people whose frame of reference is the land of the screen."²³¹

Other than seeing movie clips as a way of starting with *what* people know and *where* they are, another validation for the use of this media in preaching is the ability to recognize them as mere tools. According to Tim Eason, "media is the *ultimate tool for communication* in today's culture."²³² And to Ted Baehr, when we view movies as tools, we also need to understand that a "tool is neither good nor bad;" it's all in how we use it.²³³

A third validation for the use of movie clips in preaching is the positive effects it has on an audience. If movie clips are illustrations, then according to Ian MacPherson: as

²²⁹ Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal, *ReViewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film*, 22.

²³⁰ David W. Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World*, 86.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy: A Practical Guide to Visual Communication*, 15.

²³³ Ted Baehr, *So You Want to be in Pictures? A Christian Resource for 'Making It' in Hollywood*, 27.

illustrations, they can serve both the communicator and the audience in being able to "aid memory, stir emotion, create need, hold attention, and establish rapport between the speaker and hearer."²³⁴ This whole idea of aiding memory is one of the key motivations for using media according to Eason. For as he says: "Visually reinforcing the spoken word can *increase retention*."²³⁵ To this, John Palmieri exclaims: "If using imagery will get the people in my congregation to remember, to connect, then I want to use it. And to be honest, I think it does. Images break into people's imagination, they help their imaginations flourish, it helps them connect the dots."²³⁶ In his book, *Variety in Biblical Preaching*, Harold Freeman made a similar conclusion when he asked if video technology in general should be incorporated into our preaching. Freeman's answer is given from a communication theorist by the name of Bettinghaus who comments regarding the effects mixing audio and visual would have on an audience. Bettinghaus explains: "there are many situations in which the use of two sense modalities will provide a distinct service to the communicator in improving his chances of making an effective presentation to an audience."²³⁷ Summarizing the rest of Bettinghaus' explanations, Freeman adds: "If the content of the material is complementary, not contradictory, and the presentation is deliberately paced, not too fast, multiple channel communication can

²³⁴ Noted in Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 154.

²³⁵ Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy: A Practical Guide to Visual Communication*, 15.

²³⁶ A Leadership Interview, "The Tech Effect," 31.

²³⁷ Harold Freeman, *Variety in Biblical Preaching: Innovative Techniques and Fresh Forms* (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 166.

be helpful in gaining initial attention, maintaining attention during long presentations, clarifying complex content, or emphasizing one part of a message."²³⁸ In line with this information, Duane Litfin reports: "Researchers have found that when audiovisuals are used properly, learning can be increased as much as 300 percent, with reduction of more than 13 percent in the time it takes to communicate the material. Dramatic improvements in recall can be achieved by combining showing and telling."²³⁹

Along with this positive effect, probably one of the most obvious validations for the use of movie clips in our preaching is the fact that it speaks the language of our culture. As Eason says, fluently learning this language is therefore vital for pastors if they want to reach this new generation.²⁴⁰ Seconding this, Thomas H. Troeger in his book *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture*, declares: "Our task as preachers is to develop new strategies for presenting the gospel to a world that speaks an audiovisual language."²⁴¹ Speaking this language is required, according to Ronald Sarno, to genuinely communicate in our present age.²⁴² In addition, Len Wilson suggests that this language of visual and aural imagery adds multiple dimensions of depth to our communication.²⁴³

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*, 223.

²⁴⁰ Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy: A Practical Guide to Visual Communication*, 16.

²⁴¹ Thomas H. Troeger, *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 15.

²⁴² Ronald A. Sarno, *Media & Culture*, ed. Reynolds R. Ekstrom (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1992), 3.

²⁴³ Len Wilson, *The Wired Church: Making Media Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 25.

Thus, as Terry Mattingly maintains, it is because movies are so pervasive and invasive that today's communicators "simply cannot afford to ignore them;" for our culture is built on the language and symbols created by this mass media—so much so that Mattingly testifies that he has "never stood in a packed church lobby and failed to overhear people talking about movies."²⁴⁴

The Possible Dangers and Disadvantages of Movie Clips

Regardless of these factors, which seem to overwhelmingly validate movie clips in our preaching, there are still some inherent dangers and disadvantages that must be discussed in this section. One such danger is the possibility that using them will grant the movie it comes from an endorsement. As Kevin Miller warns in his chapter, "Illustrating From Pop Culture," the following is possible:

When a preacher refers to a movie, it comes across as an implied endorsement of that movie. I may use just one scene that is morally impeccable, but I can't assume my listeners will hear it as my using only one scene. They'll think, *Oh, he went to that movie. He must have liked it because he's talking about it.* There may be something morally reprehensible in another scene of the movie, and I don't want that implied endorsement to come across. Faced with that dilemma, what am I going to do?²⁴⁵

Another inherent danger is how a person using a movie clip in the message can begin or ultimately rely more on the *Cine* Spirit rather than the *Holy* Spirit. Doing so would be considered by Quentin Schultze as a violation in human communication,

²⁴⁴ Terry Mattingly, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, ed. Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 82.

²⁴⁵ Kevin A. Miller, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 510.

especially since all forms of speech are dependant on God's grace and God's gifts.²⁴⁶ Yet this danger according to Marshall Shelly, editor of *Leadership*, has been the problem in recent years with the use of visual multimedia. As he relates, more and more communicators are expecting these visuals to do the "heavy lifting each week," whereby they rely on them to:

(1) Engage the attention of the congregation and (2) Communicate the spirit and the message of the Christian faith [so much so that] in many churches, the screen is the most conspicuous visual element, and it's where the eyes are directed for most of the service. There's nothing wrong with that. Visuals are a great tool for communicating. But it's important to remember that soul work is more than snappy screen work.²⁴⁷

To this concern, *Leadership's* article "The Tech Effect" claims that some pastors (in using tools like film clips) have allowed these things to not only augment the message, but to replace it.²⁴⁸

Other than the danger of relying too much on movie clips, as Kenton Anderson reveals, they can actually hinder a sermon thus proving to be a disadvantage. How exactly can this happen? Anderson explains:

A [movie] clip is a supercharged sermon illustration, subject to all the strengths and weaknesses of such illustrations and then some. [For one thing, it] can eat precious time and interrupt carefully designed sermon flow. Further, a [movie] clip creates a world for the listener to inhabit. Many times that world is more compelling than the

²⁴⁶ Quentin J. Schultze, *Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media*, 34.

²⁴⁷ Marshall Shelly, "The Best Visual Ever," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 5.

²⁴⁸ A *Leadership* Interview, "The Tech Effect," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 28.

world of the sermon itself. Listeners can get lost there, losing touch with the intent of the sermon itself.²⁴⁹

One distinct disadvantage and danger in using movie clips in one's preaching is that over time, parishioners will come to expect to be entertained. As Shane Hipps pronounces: "An extensive use of video clips and short films in worship turns the congregation into an audience expecting to be entertained. When electronic media are taken to extremes, we become spectators of the gospel rather than participants in the kingdom of God."²⁵⁰

Coinciding with the danger to rely more on *Cine Spirit* is the danger of using this technology as a "crutch." As Palmieri admits: "I worry that we can lean on technology as a crutch instead of getting into the congregation, learning their language, their heart, and being able to communicate on that level...[t]ruth travels most effectively on the platform of relationship."²⁵¹

A final danger or disadvantage in using a movie clip has to be the possibility of it either overwhelming the message or not relating to it at all. The danger and disadvantage of doing this with a movie clip, or any illustration for that matter, is best seen in the analogy borrowed from John Nicholls Booth, as told by Haddon Robinson: "Illustrations resemble a row of footlights that illuminate the actors and actresses on the stage. If a footlight shines into the eyes of audience, it blinds them to what they ought to see.

²⁴⁹ Kenton C. Anderson, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 609.

²⁵⁰ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church*, 155.

²⁵¹ A Leadership Interview, "The Tech Effect," 32.

[Therefore even though that illustration] may entertain or amuse an audience [it may also get] in the way of your sermon."²⁵² Following up this analogy, others, such as Leith Anderson, share Robinson's concern that illustrations can overwhelm or not even relate to the message. Something movie clips can do as well. In an article where Anderson is interviewed entitled, "Is PowerPoint Fading?," Anderson voices:

The challenge is to proclaim the themes and truths of the Bible and then use illustrations or technology to support and reinforce that. The danger is when we are so enamored with a sermon illustration, whether verbal or video, that we use it, even though it does not effectively make the point the Bible is making. This [however] isn't new. This has been a temptation for every generation. As preachers, we need to be driven by the truth of the Word of God and not by the technology or the cleverness of the story.²⁵³

Let us hope such practices are not common among preachers today, for as Bryan Chapell remarks: "Illustrations are a means, not an end. The goal of a sermon is to present scriptural truth, not present illustrations. As helpful as illustrations can be, a sermon built on illustration rather than on solid biblical exposition displays a dangerous shift of focus."²⁵⁴

The Advantages of Movie Clips

However many *disadvantages* there are to using a movie clip in preaching, there seems to be an overwhelming number of *advantages* heralding its needed use; outside of

²⁵² Used in Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 155.

²⁵³ A Leadership Interview, "Is PowerPoint Fading?," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 37.

²⁵⁴ Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*, 139.

the fact, as Shelly points out, that "visuals have always been an important element in communicating the gospel."²⁵⁵

One such advantage relates to how we are now living in a new era of communication, an era dominated by images. As Eric Reed summarizes culture guru Andy Crouch, the first age was oral communication; the second age was written communication; and the third age, which we are now in, is the age of visual communication or as Crouch calls it, "visualcy."²⁵⁶ In support of this claim, Reed uses statistics that show that "more than half of pastors (58%) report their use of PowerPoint has increased in the past three years, and 50% are using more multi-media clips from movies, TV, or other outside sources."²⁵⁷ Adding more weight to these numbers, Mattingly quotes Haddon Robinson who said: "We have now moved in our society into a postliterate society. The way in which people get ideas, the way in which they shape their ideals, comes not because they read books, but because they see it, they visualize it."²⁵⁸ This visualizing of ideas can be used to one's advantage while preaching. For if Reed and Robinson are both right, then perhaps with this increased use of visual media we might also see an increase in the number of lives being transformed by the work God's Word as it is properly proclaimed. In this way, movie clips are redeemed.

²⁵⁵ Marshall Shelly, "The Best Visual Ever," 5.

²⁵⁶ Eric Reed, "Preaching By Faith & By Sight," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 25.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

²⁵⁸ Terry Mattingly, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, 85-86.

Relating to the previous benefit, a second advantage for using movie clips has to do with its appeal to today's postmodern audiences. Quoting Gene Edward Veith in his book, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, Graham Johnston recites: "A major force in shaping the postmodern mind has been the impact of contemporary technology."²⁵⁹ Why is this? Johnston says the answer is because images function to allow the viewer to construct his or her own interpretation of reality, which is why movies suit postmoderners and help to create the postmodern ethos.²⁶⁰ While this may be true, Johnston indicates that one of the negative side-effects to all this is that postmoderners "tend to confuse truth and entertainment."²⁶¹ What complicates this fact even further, Johnston adds, is how many in the church have failed to recognize this shift in our culture, which has led to a catastrophe in effectively being able to preach and reach those today.²⁶² As Johnston explains, it's kind of like the rock band Journey in the early 1980s when music videos first came out—band members decided not to release a music video with their new album, insisting, "It's about the music, man" to which both the album and the band never recovered.²⁶³ In reflecting upon the death of this band, Johnston references Calvin Miller's question by asking: "Can the church become pictorial in order to live, or will it

²⁵⁹ Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 48.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 49.

²⁶² Ibid, 163.

²⁶³ Ibid.

remain only audio and die?"²⁶⁴ For those who would argue that the church has survived for centuries without all this stuff like movies clips, Johnston points out that while this is true, the early church also flourished without the things that we now use regularly such as electricity.²⁶⁵ Concluding his case for preaching to the postmodern audience, Johnston asserts:

Keep in mind, however, that how you communicate God's timeless message will constantly be changing and, yet, God's Word won't. Does that mean you shouldn't let pass the old methods of communicating that eternal Word? Well, don't confuse the message and the method. How many more people might you connect to the Word of God if you did use different methods, maybe even show a scene from a film?²⁶⁶

Of course, Graham Johnston is not the only one who contends that movie clips are an effective way to connect with postmoderners. Robert K. Johnston as featured in the Time article, "The Gospel According To Spider-Man," believes that movies are basically modern parables that connect an audience seeking not reason but emotional relevance; and being that we are in the postmodern era, audiences have moved from understanding rational truth to understanding truth as told in stories.²⁶⁷ To this end, Johnston reminds us that Jesus used stories and "in his day, parables were the equivalent of movies."²⁶⁸

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages to support the use of movie clips in expository preaching is the fact that movie clips themselves support Robinson's notion of

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Richard Corliss, "The Gospel According To Spider-Man."

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

"The Big Idea" in preaching. In an article entitled, "Why Use Video in Preaching?" featured in *Preaching* magazine, George Temple, founder of the website SermonSpice.com, relates: "It is fascinating how seamless videos can become in a sermon. A well placed video clip can express an idea that might take ten minutes of explanation in the space of two to three minutes. Not only have you saved time for the rest of your message but your congregation is completely engaged."²⁶⁹ Naturally, Temple's reference to a "video clip" also implies a movie clip, as evident by the way they are treated the same on his website. What's interesting, though, is Temple's recognition that a movie clip can convey an idea. Of course, screenwriters have always understood this principle. According to the Academy Award-winning writer of "Witness" in her book, *You Can Write a Movie*, all successful films must serve an idea.²⁷⁰ When looking deeper into this notion that films relate ideas, one ultimately finds that, not only is this true, but it is also well known by those who teach and make movies. In his bestselling and world-renowned textbook, *Understanding Movies*, Louis Giannetti boldly asserts that every film contains an idea and depicts these ideas to some degree of explicitness.²⁷¹ This realization of a movie's ideology is something that has recently been taken seriously by not only Christians and non-Christians but fascinatingly enough, governments as well. Evidence to this is the story that broke this past June of 2007—the German government

²⁶⁹ George Temple, "Why Use Video in Preaching?," *Preaching*, July-August, 2006, 7.

²⁷⁰ Pamela Wallace, *You Can Write a Movie* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2000), 4.

²⁷¹ Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 448.

barred motion picture studio United Artist from filming at certain locations due to the fact that their leading actor in the movie was Tom Cruise, a professing Scientologist.

According to the German government, this upcoming film entitled "Valkyrie" about Germany's national hero Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, the officer who attempted to assassinate Hitler in 1944, would be insulted by such a person as Cruise because of his religious ideologies. The Time article, "Why Germany Hates Tom Cruise," reported that many in Germany felt that had their government allowed United Artist unrestricted access to key locations, it would have equaled acceptance of Scientology.²⁷² In response, United Artists CEO Paula Wagner stated: "Mr. Cruise's personal beliefs have absolutely no bearing on the movie's plot, themes, or content."²⁷³ Surprisingly enough, Giannetti may very well disagree based on his textbook. Yet putting all this aside, the truth is that movies—and their respected movie clips—contain ideas, which is a fact that should encourage their role in expository preaching.

A fourth advantage worth noting is how a movie clip can communicate *pathos*. Along with *logos* ("word/truth") and *ethos* ("character") in Aristotle's classic training on effective communication, *pathos* is "passion." This is important as Leith Anderson explains, for "if someone tells the truth but is not passionate about it, or if someone passionately says something true but lacks character, the message is undermined [since]

²⁷² Andrew Purvis, "Why Germany Hates Tom Cruise," *Time*, June 26, 2007, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1637564,00.html>. (accessed August 24, 2007).

²⁷³ Ibid.

all three ingredients are essential."²⁷⁴ With this said, Anderson then relates this comment to technology and pathos by declaring:

[W]ith pathos...a video [or movie clip] can be very effective in communicating passion, touching people's hearts, engaging the emotions. That emotion may be love, it may be fear, it can be just about anything in the range of emotional possibilities. But technology can deliver it in a way that often the individual speaker cannot.²⁷⁵

As a technological tool, another distinct advantage movie clips have when looking at expository preaching is how parts of a sermon lends themselves to movie clips. Such parts include the sermon's introduction, illustrations within the body of a message, and its conclusion. Let's first look at the part we call the introduction.

Having provided enough information to substantiate the fact that movies garnish attention, one way in which the introduction lends itself to this type of support material is how a movie clip can "develop interest." As Kent Edwards suggests, developing interest in an introduction is essential to gaining an audiences' attention and showing why they should continue to listen.²⁷⁶ In line with these comments, David Henderson says: "Challenging scenes [like from movies], whether light or serious, raise an issue and stimulate reflection. They can be put to good use as an introduction to a message, readying people to hear."²⁷⁷ Along with this testimony, Keith Willhite in his chapter,

²⁷⁴ A Leadership Interview, "Is PowerPoint Fading?," 37.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Kent Edwards, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 373.

²⁷⁷ David W. Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World*, 90.

"Whet an Appetite for God's Word," discusses nine elements that make for relevant sermon introductions.²⁷⁸ With this in mind, a movie clip can match the first element, "Begin with the People," by visually showing people what's going on in their lives. A movie clip can perform the second element, "Evoke an Emotional/Spiritual Image," through its use of story and drama by showing a scene from a movie that acts as a metaphor. A movie clip can also provide a single image that can be sustained throughout the sermon as Willhite recommends in this second element. For element three, "Develop the Listener's Need," a film clip can easily dramatize what's at stake by way of a negative example by showing the consequences of failing to listen to a particular truth or principle laid out in the biblical text. For the fourth element, "Move from the People to the Subject," a movie clip can visually identify the subject or idea. Coinciding with the fourth element, it is possible for a movie clip to satisfy this fifth element, "Give a Sneak Peak at the Point," by displaying a scene that depicts reward or a positive outcome like winning, thus indicating to the audience, "Just as this person in this scene got this, so perhaps by listening, the preacher can show me how God has this in store for me." The sixth element, "Create an Appetite for the Sermon," is trickier for a movie clip. While a movie clip can certainly "create an appetite," the preacher must ask: "An Appetite for what?" In answering this, a communicator must be very careful in his or her selection of which film clip to use. The last three elements Willhite mentions relate to effectively transitioning the sermon from introduction to the reading of biblical text. While a movie clip can play

²⁷⁸ Keith Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance: Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 45ff.

a part in accomplishing this, it is absolutely essential that this is done well because one will be moving an audience from the *visual* to the *verbal*.

An illustration used within the body of the sermon is another part of the sermon that lends itself well to movie clips. Numerous reasons for why a movie clip can competently function as an illustration have already been mentioned; however, we must discuss a few more to further demonstrate the advantages of movie clips. The first reason has to do with story and the principle of show and tell. As Craig Brian Larson explains, one of the reasons some illustrations work better than others is because they use story to "provide impact through their plot, conflict, resolution, curiosity, human interest, climax, life, and surprise."²⁷⁹ Of course, all of this can be visually depicted in a movie clip, especially since movies themselves are vehicles for story. Regarding the principle of show and tell, Willhite points out that in biblical preaching, we tell and show, with stories playing a major role in our "showing."²⁸⁰ To this we can conclude that movie clips can indeed tell and show, or at least facilitate the "showing." In *Envisioning the Word*, Richard A. Jensen lends credence to this observation, by sharing how preachers in his study used movie clips as illustrations because it was just like using a story.²⁸¹ Other reasons why illustrations lend themselves well to movie clips are because they: (1) relate

²⁷⁹ Craig Brian Larson, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 488.

²⁸⁰ Keith Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance: Without Dumbing Down*, 101.

²⁸¹ Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 102.

to an audience;²⁸² (2) exegete life;²⁸³ (3) provide every-day disciple illustrations;²⁸⁴ and (4) can apply ideas to people's experience.²⁸⁵

A final part of a sermon that lends itself to the use of movie clips is the conclusion. In Kent Edwards' chapter, "Satisfying Conclusions," he discusses two key things an effective conclusion must do: (1) it must reinforce the main idea of the message and (2) it must emphasize the application or action the preacher wants his or her audience to take.²⁸⁶ Here, a movie clip can address the first requirement by dramatically showing the main idea in such a way that an audience's mind and heart can be touched with a lasting image of the idea. To the second requirement Edwards suggests, a movie clip has to be careful of what additional action it may be emphasizing. Caution here is recommended, but it can still be done by showing the action either directly or through the use of a contrasting example. One other support for the use of movie clips as conclusions can be found in Haddon Robinson's idea of *Visualization*. By *Visualization*, he means, "A method that projects a congregation into the future and pictures a situation in which [the

²⁸² Wayne Harvey, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 523.

²⁸³ John Ortberg, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 527.

²⁸⁴ Craig Brian Larson, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, 530.

²⁸⁵ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 152.

²⁸⁶ Kent Edwards, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, 374.

congregation] might apply the truth that we have preached."²⁸⁷ Here, a movie clip could literally visualize a situation that portrays a favorable or promising outcome that a church attendee could then see for his or herself.

A sixth advantage that movie clips offer in expository preaching is how they lend themselves to the principles of effective communication—specifically, the use of comparison and contrast, which are two of Larson's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Preachers." As Larson points out, a good comparison enlivens the imagination and can stir emotion.²⁸⁸ For a movie clip to do this, one would simply compare what the Bible teaches and what may occur in a scene. As far as the use of contrast, a preacher would only need to show a movie clip that pictures an example of a person or group of people doing either the very opposite of what is taught in the Scripture or partially not completing that action—in other words, failing. As Larson states, by contrasting, a communicator actually accentuates and intensifies what he or she is saying.²⁸⁹ This is something Christ did all the time "to underline the difference between past and present, between his teaching and other teaching."²⁹⁰ An example of this is found in Matthew 5:27-28 where Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery

²⁸⁷ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 179.

²⁸⁸ Craig Brian Larson, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, 395.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 396.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

with her in his heart."²⁹¹ Therefore, a movie clip can clearly compare and contrast what a speaker is talking about from the biblical text.

A seventh and final advantage worth noting, is how movie clips can fit into a variety of sermonic developments and forms. In terms of the development of a message, a movie clip can actually fit well into all four of Robinson's developmental charts, shown in *Biblical Preaching*.²⁹² For example, in the "Deductive Development," a movie clip can be used to introduce the idea. In the "Inductive Development," a movie clip can be used to reinforce or restate the idea in the conclusion of the message. In the "Inductive-Deductive Development," a movie clip could be shown to highlight or emphasize the idea within the body of the message. And finally, in the "Subject-Completed Development," a movie clip could serve to either introduce the subject or complement it by possibly using multiple clips.

There are, of course, other sermonic developments or forms espoused by other preachers and teachers of homiletics. One such development is explained by Richard Jensen, in which the sermon retells a story or stitches a story.²⁹³ As an example based on this lesson, one could easily use a movie clip to juxtapose the biblical text; from there, one could show successive movie clips from the same film that captures the story of the entire movie, all while pausing in between to tell the story of the biblical text or vice versa. Perhaps a more recent homiletic development that would work well with a movie

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 117.

²⁹³ Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching*, 128-129ff.

clip is Andy Stanley's sermon map he describes as "ME, WE, GOD, YOU, WE."²⁹⁴

With this development, one could easily pick any five of its movements in which to place a movie clip. In "ME," a preacher could play a movie clip that would engage the audience or establish common ground. In "WE," a person could create tension by possibly showing a scene that does not have a satisfying resolution, whereby forcing the audience to allow the preacher to resolve it. In "GOD," a communicator may use a movie clip to display a character's journey that could match a journey of a biblical character. In "YOU," all speakers must do is use a movie clip that actually shows the application or action they desire their audiences to take. And finally, in "WE," a preacher can use a movie clip to visually demonstrate what following the application can do, not only for them, but for others as well.

Practical Advice for Using Movie Clips in Preaching

The dictionary defines *advice* as an opinion or recommendation offered as a guide to action.²⁹⁵ What follows here, is an attempt to provide practical guidance—from the small pool of literature available today—that speaks to the use of movie clips in preaching.

Perhaps one of the most direct pieces of advice comes from an article featured in Facts & Trends magazine by Don Pucik simply entitled, "Using a Movie Clip."²⁹⁶ Here,

²⁹⁴ Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Sisters: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), 120ff.

²⁹⁵ *Dictionary.com*, "Advice," <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/advice/> (accessed August 24, 2007).

²⁹⁶ Don Pucik, "Using a Movie Clip," *Fact & Trends*, September, 2003, 12.

Pucik lists seven steps a person should follow in order to use a movie clip in a church service. Step one is, "Prepare your message early," which is Pucik's way of saying that the message comes first and one should "never search for a sermon to illustrate a good film clip;" to that he adds, the sooner the message is done, the sooner one can search and use an appropriate film clip.²⁹⁷ The second step is "Identify the most important point or theme of your message." For expository preachers, this step may seem like a step back. Even so, Pucik is still able to recognize how movie clips carry ideas; thus, these ideas must not conflict with the message's own idea, which would then serve to undermine it. Step three is, "Establish a 'family-friendly' standard for the film clips you will use," which means establishing what types of movie clips will be used based on content and rating, knowing that using any film clip implies endorsement. The fourth step is to "Make time to search for the film clip that best illustrates the point." Just like with conventional illustrations, one should always be ready to jot down a good idea when viewing a film and allow for the rejection of any movie clip that doesn't fit the sermon's point. Step five is, "Observe the copyright laws governing the use of the film clip." Here, Pucik lists several websites, such as like the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (www.mplc.com) and Christian Video Licensing Inc., or CVLI (www.cvli.org). Due to the newness of movie clip use, any user should recheck the laws pertaining to their use because some sites have received direct permission to legally display clips outside of another specific license agreement like CVLI. The sixth step is, "Prepare to use the film clip in your worship service," which essentially means taking the necessary actions to

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

prepare yourself and the person assisting you to practice ahead and show the clip in public. And finally, step seven is, "Don't over-use film clips," for as Pucik concludes:

Use film clips sparingly to maintain value to your congregation. Good film clips are a lot of work to find and use with excellence. Less is better over time in order to retain the highest level of interest and educational benefit. A movie clip is a story brought to life on screen. Jesus embraced and communicated stories that captured the imagination of ordinary people and lodged truth deep into their thoughts. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we can still do the same today.²⁹⁸

Pucik later went on to write another article called, "The Art of Video Sermon Illustration." This article, as featured in *Preaching* magazine, is basically a restatement and a rewording of these same seven steps.²⁹⁹

Another bit of advice comes from Jarrett Stevens, on how to prevent people from passively staring at a screen. To this, Stevens answers:

Something we do that's insanely easy is just having people talk to each other. Typically, the first five or ten minutes of a sermon I'll introduce an idea and then tell everyone, "Hey, turn to the person next to you and talk about the best Christmas gift you ever got." How simple is that? To actually turn 90 degrees and look at someone next to you in church is shocking to some people, and all the introverts freak out. But to engage and acknowledge that you are not anonymous is important.³⁰⁰

So the advice here, for those of us who use screens, is to break up the monotony of the service in order to shift the audience's attention to personal contact.

A third suggestion for preachers is to just watch and learn about movies. This advice comes from Mark Moring, editor of ChristianityTodayMovies.com who says that as Christians:

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Don Pucik, "The Art of Video Sermon Illustrations," *Preaching*, July-August, 2006, 9ff.

³⁰⁰ A Leadership Interview, "The Tech Effect," 32.

To carry on intelligent discussions about current films, and not just movies that are categorically "Christian" or merely "safe for the whole family," we need to watch, or at least learn about, what much of the world is watching. [For example, *Spider-Man 3* which is] reminiscent of Paul's description of our internal battle in Romans 7 [and other films like *Harry Potter* which contain virtues.] Just because a film portrays sin doesn't mean it's advocating bad behavior. If sin is shown to have consequences, the movie may have a moral worldview right in line with Romans 3:23 and 6:23. And that's what makes a movie a good discussion starter.³⁰¹

Three other pieces of practical advice come from Richard Jensen. The first comes from his study of other pastors who use visual multimedia, which counsels us to keep the audience focused on the text when using a film clip.³⁰² The second piece of practical advice is to keep a movie clip between four-to-six minutes in length.³⁰³ To some, this may seem too long. But as Kent Edwards advises: "Generally, the more abstract an idea, the more time is required to help people to understand its relevance to life."³⁰⁴ Of course, some expositors may argue to not preach an idea unless it is clear enough in the first place, and to never use the abstract. The third practical tip from Jensen is advice he calls "Pastor-to-Pastor," which lists seven important things to first pray and think about when it comes to using any sort of visualization in preaching.³⁰⁵ In summary, Jensen advises us to: (1) help key leaders and church members to understand what and why; (2) get experienced help that will get the right hardware, and don't be cheap; (3) get the right software; (4) train those using it to use it correctly; (5) when using it for the first time,

³⁰¹ Mark Moring, "Jesus at the Movies," *Leadership* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 67.

³⁰² Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching*, 101-102.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 103.

³⁰⁴ Kent Edwards, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, 373.

³⁰⁵ Richard A. Jensen, 118.

knock people's socks off; (6) do it consistently well; and (7) sustain it by training enough individuals and planning ahead to train even more people.

As we said earlier, movie clips essentially function as one type of support material that in many ways operate like traditional illustrations, though being visual in nature. With that said, Bryan Chapell has some other advice that one might find very helpful. First, realize that an illustration may appear at the beginning, middle, or end.³⁰⁶ Second, determine when and where to use an illustration by accessing what will make the message's application most effective.³⁰⁷ And third, be careful of using inappropriate humor or something too graphic that will either overwhelm or distract your audience.³⁰⁸

Because things like movies give off "signals" that convey ideas or themes, the advice that we can derive from Mattingly, with the help of Haddon Robinson, is to use a movie clip with the strongest "signal," a signal that would allow one to move a person from where they are ("The Mall") to where you are in preaching ("The Pulpit").³⁰⁹

In keeping with this idea that movie clips are essentially illustrations, one can also deduce the following when applying Haddon Robinson's advice on the relationship between speaker and listener and the five areas that overlap one another.³¹⁰ One, the most powerful movie clips are those in which the experience of the people portrayed on the

³⁰⁶ Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*, 141.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 144.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 153, 157.

³⁰⁹ Terry Mattingly, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, 90-93

³¹⁰ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 156-157.

screen overlaps a congregant's personal experience. The second-best movie clip is one in which the person or group's learned on-screen experience overlaps an audience's lived experience. Next, the third-best movie clip is when the on-screen character has a direct experience that overlaps your audience's felt experience. The fourth layer and least effective movie clip is one in which knowledge is somehow pictured to display information about some historic event or person, which overlaps only with the audience's learned experience. And finally, the fifth level we can deduce from Robinson is that the worst movie clip to use is one that depicts stories that have absolutely nothing to do with one's audience. For more practical help, see the appendix for a list of resources on how to find both ideas for movie illustrations and places to download actual movie clips.

In summary, we can easily see how the principles of expository preaching can apply to the use of movie clips as support material. However, as we use them in our preaching, we must hold movie clips to the same standards as other conventional illustrations: that they never take the place of the biblical text and that they never take the place of the biblical preacher. For just as special effects are meant to help tell the story of a movie and not *be* the story, so movie clips should help preach the sermon and not *be* the sermon.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT DESIGN

As stated in the first chapter, the goal of this study is to create and teach a half-day workshop in which participants can attend and learn how to use movie clips effectively in expository preaching. I created the workshop and specifically designed it for pastors, youth directors, staff associates, seminary students, homiletic professors, and anyone else with some preaching experience and an interest in the topic. The workshop required an audience with preaching experience because participants were required to bring three sermons they had previously preached that did not use any movie clips. The goal of the workshop was to teach participants how to implement effective methods and practices for using movie clips to support expository preaching—therefore, it was vital to have them bring actual sermons in order for the information shared in this workshop to be applicable. The time constraints of the workshop also required participants to bring already-prepared sermons. The following pages consist of the Leader's Guide I created and used to teach this workshop, with the goal and objectives included.



How to Use Movie Clips
Effectively
in Expository Preaching
WORKSHOP
Leader's Guide

How to Use Movie Clips
Effectively
in Expository Preaching
WORKSHOP
Leader's Guide

Preliminary Items (10min)

- Greeting and Thanks
- Introductions
 - Introduce yourself
 - Attendees (Ask them to give their name, what church or ministry they belong to, and why they're here/what do they hope to get out of this workshop)
- Provide information about the Facilities (location of bathrooms, water, etc.)
- Review Schedule for this Half-Day Workshop
 - 10am-Noon Instruction
 - Noon – 1pm Lunch
 - 1pm-3pm Practicum

Goal and Objectives for the Workshop

As stated in the title of this workshop, I really want us to walk out of here knowing "How to Use Movie Clips Effectively in Expository Preaching"

With that in mind, because this workshop is divided into two main parts – instruction and practicum, there are two separate Objectives for each of part:

Objective for Part I: Participants will be able to *describe* and *identify* effective methods and practices for using movie clips in expository preaching.

Objective for Part II: Participants will be able *apply* the principles learned in the first part of this workshop by effectively using a movie clip in the introduction, body, and conclusion of three different sermons.

Part I: Instruction (1:50min)

A. Expository Preaching (15min)

What It Is

Expository Preaching – is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers. (as defined in Haddon Robinson's, *Biblical Preaching*, 21)

Essential, you are preaching "The Big Idea" of a biblical text(s) and not your own "ideas" about what you *think* or *want* the passage to say...

...in a way that is Relevant, Engaging, and Applicable to your specific audience.

Note: "The Big Idea" is also known as: main idea, theme, central idea, take-home truth, or just idea

What this Doesn't Mean

Though a person may choose to preach an expository message where there is a Verse-by-Verse flow of the sermon, Expository Preaching is not necessarily expounding Verse-by-Verse where all you do is explain what a passage meant to its original listeners (including their language) as a sort of running commentary with little to no application; this is commonly called *Exegetical Preaching* (i.e., John MacArthur) and not necessarily Expository Preaching.

While both types of preaching can be classified as "biblical," in that they both use the Bible and are true to its meaning...

...what distinguishes Expository Preaching, is the fact that...

...it doesn't just *Teach the Bible to People* - what the Bible means and its content...requiring NO creativity...

...it also doesn't just *Teach People the Bible* - imparting only biblical truth hoping that an audience will understand and remember the sermon...requiring LITTLE creativity...

...rather, the goal of Expository Preaching is to *Teach People How to live a life that reflects the Values, Principles, and Truths of the Bible*...OFTEN requiring creativity...

...because, as Andy Stanley put it, you are *Communicating for a Change*.

What this Means

It means, Expository Preaching...

...is not Dull or Boring...

...is not Tied to one Form or Development...

...it uses a Variety of Approaches and Methods...

...and it allows for and encourages the use of Creativity that is relevant and engaging.

ONE WAY to do that – is through the use of Movie Clips!

B. Movie Clips (95min)

Just as special effects are meant to help tell the story of a movie and not be the story, so movie clips should help preach the sermon and not be the sermon.

Movie Clips do not make sermons relevant, what makes sermons relevant is our proper interpretation and application of God' Word, that's what makes a sermon relevant.

Definition

A movie clip (also called film clip) is the visual and audio presentation of a particular scene or combination of scenes from a specific movie created by a motion picture studio.

In short, a movie clip is the display of a scene or scenes taken from a full-length film, whether that be from a secular, Christian, or independent movie.

Our focus will be movie clips taken from secular not sacred films, for a number of reasons; usually because they are better *known*, better *made*, and better *applied* to our postmodern audience which include the people inside and outside our churches.

Distinctions

A movie illustration differs from a movie clip in that, a movie illustration never actually shows the scene, it's only talked about and used like a conventional illustration or story.

Note: A movie clip can come from a movie illustration, but once that movie illustration is seen, it needs to be referred to as a movie clip.

A video clip is sometimes incorrectly called a movie clip, yet a video clip differs in that it (a) does not always contain audio (ex. motion backgrounds and countdowns); (b) can be short segments (clips) taken from TV; (c) created videos made by a church; (d) and is usually a purchased standalone featurette created by a 3rd party (ex. Digital Juice, Igniter, etc.).

What Function Do Movie Clips Play in Preaching?

Movie Clips essentially function as one type of *support material*.

Support material is any material outside of the biblical material that supports the Idea of the message. This material does this by:

- Supporting
- Reinforcing
- Restating
- Specifying
- Amplifying
- Applying
- Enhancing
- Explaining
- Clarifying
- Conveys
- Proving
- Relating
- Validating
- Demonstrating

Other Examples of Support Material:

[Option: Have participants help form this list]

- Stories
- Stats
- General Illustrations
- Examples
- Quotes
- Object Lessons
- Videos
- Handouts
- Skits/Drama
- Audio Bits
- Slide Shows
- Narration

In reality, a well-chosen and well-placed movie clip should hold the same qualities as conventional support material/illustrations and should operate in like manner.

A movie clip, in many ways, is nothing more than a visual illustration.

NOTE: Don't make the mistake of making the Scriptures your support material!!!

Why Use Movie Clips?

Other than the fact that we see the use of the visual in Scripture, there are a number of other reasons to use movie clips today.

Cultural and Communication Reason

Both Christian and non-Christian scholars agree, that Film is the dominant language of our culture.

Cultural guru Andy Crouch tells us that we are now entering into a third age of communication. The first age was oral communication, the second age was written communication, and the third age is visual communication (see *Leadership* vol.28, no.3, 25)

This does not mean we should see visual as competing with verbal/oral, rather we should see the incredible benefits of pairing both together.

Fact: Researchers have found that when audiovisuals, which a movie clip is, are used properly, learning can be increased as much as 300%. Along with this, there is a reduction of more than 13% in the time it takes to communicate material.

This means that the average churchgoer has a better chance of correctly receiving, retaining, and relating our messages to their lives when we effectively use audiovisuals like movie clips.

Dangers and Disadvantages of Movie Clips

- We imply that we are endorsing the entire film

Note: To help counter this, use a statement in your bulletin or at the bottom of your sermon note sheet stating something like:

"NewLife Community Church does not endorse the movie from which the movie clip is taken and used during the service in any way."

- We can rely more on the Cine Spirit more than the Holy Spirit and expect it do the real work in a person's heart
- It can distract and possibly draw the attention of our audience away from the message
- People can come to expect to be entertained

- It can be a "crutch" for not really relating to our congregations

John Palmieri said: "Truth travels most effectively on the platform of relationship."

- A movie clip may introduce ideas you don't want from other worldviews
- A movie clip can overwhelm the message
- In our excitement and enthusiasm, we can choose a movie clip that doesn't even relate to the Idea of the message

Advantages of Movie Clips

- It starts with *what* people know and *where* people are (building a bridge between two worlds), a way of finding common ground
- It is merely a tool, only the user determines if it will be a tool for good or bad
- It can aid memory, stir emotions, create need, hold attention, and establish rapport for the speaker
- It speaks the language of our culture
- It appeals to both postmoderners and non-Christians
- It supports the notion of "The Big Idea" since every film essentially has a central *idea*
- It communicates what Aristotle called *pathos* (passion); therefore a movie clip can effectively communicate passion, touching people's hearts and engaging their emotions
- It lends itself to each part of the sermon (introduction, illustration/application/point within the body of the message, and conclusion)
- It fits well into a variety of sermon forms and developments

General Advice for Selecting Movie Clips

- Supports or promotes the *Idea* of the sermon
- Serves the message or text and not the other way around
- Matches the sensitivity level of an audience
- Motivates a person to listen or apply
- Does not create controversy for the sake of looking cool
- Evokes emotion but does not overwhelm them
- Engages the *intellect* (causing one to think about their lives in relation to God's truth)
- Engages the *imagination* (causing one to envision what their lives can be like if they live God's truth)
- Uses the power of story
- Appeals to the whole person
- Conveys shared experiences on 1 of 5 levels, with Level 1 being the most ideal
 - Level 1 - most powerful movie clips are the ones where the experience of the people portrayed on the screen overlaps your congregant's personal experience.
 - Level 2 - second-best movie clip is where the person or group's learned experience on screen overlaps your audience's lived experience
 - Level 3 - third-best movie clip is when the character on screen has a direct experience that overlaps your attendee's felt experience.
 - Level 4 - least effective movie clip is where knowledge is somehow pictured to display information about some historic event or person and making it overlap with the audience's learned experience
 - Level 5 - the worst movie clip is one that depicts stories that have very little to do with your audience's experience

5 Types of Movie Clips

Generally, a movie clip falls into one of five categories or types. This is important to recognize, as it can effect how you use them in your message and apply them to your audience.

Object Lesson	Example	*Experience	Metaphor	Symbol
can be +/- illustrates or teaches a principle/moral/truth in a movie clip, a character(s) will take some form of action and this action reveals a principle/moral/truth he or she embodies or lives by emphasizing their character	part = whole a pattern or model (like/as) in a movie clip, the character(s) will often say, do, or think something that is an Example of what we or others might say, do or think in general	a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something, either physically, emotionally, or spiritually or a combination in a movie clip, you see a character(s) having an experience that we can relate to or identify with personally in some way great or small	a comparison between 2 seemingly unrelated things or subjects in a movie clip, this comparison is Indirect (A for B) which is necessary in secular clips since they can't actually show or directly represent events or truths found in the Bible, OR it can be representative of life's experiences	something used to represent something else; something material for something immaterial in a movie clip, this representation is usually Direct (A for A), but carries with it, a hint of metaphoric since in a secular clip, "A" can't necessarily be a Direct rep. of something seen or taught in the Bible
- Example: "50 First Dates" (1:48 min.) Sandler's character gets even with assistant and laughs about it, showing that revenge can be funny, revealing something about him	Example: "Catch Me If You Can" (2:37 min.) Frank runs away when finding out his parents are getting a divorce. This is one <i>example</i> of the effects divorce has on kids.	Example: "Bad Boys II" (0:59 min.) Marcus <i>experiences</i> what many of us feel at times, that God seems to send people in our lives to test us.	Example: "In Good Company" (1:28 min.) Here, Carter's car crash after just buying a new Porsche can be a <i>metaphor</i> of how material things don't last OR how in life, just when we think things are looking good for once, then crash, something bad happens unexpectedly	Example: "Batman" (2:23 min.) Here, Batman's chest armor built into his batsuit is <i>symbolic</i> of the "breastplate of righteousness;" and just as Batman needs protection as he wars against crime, so we need protection in spiritual warfare
+ Example: "Braveheart" (1:42 min.) Gibson's character when offered a chance to compromise in order to live, says life is more than just not being dead, which says a lot about his character & and his convictions.	Example: "Collateral" (1:41 min.) Tom Cruise's character is an <i>example</i> of how a lot of people in our postmodern culture think about right and wrong and our existence.	Example: "Daddy Day Care" (2:08 min.) Murphy's character <i>experiences</i> what some people think about parenting – they wonder how much more they can take and was it a mistake.		

* = most powerful type of movie clip

Something to Consider about Types

Sometimes it can be challenging to distinguish between these 5 types. Part of this is due to the symbiotic relationship these types have in literature. But in our case, the primary reason this happens in our preaching is because...

...It Depends on how you use the movie clip and apply it to your audience.

Example: "What About Bob?" (1:41 min.)

After the movie clip is done playing, in the scene where Bob gets the Baby-Steps book, you could use that clip to say:

- (A) "When it comes to spiritual maturity, Christians especially new ones, need to take it one "baby" step at a time."

Here the Movie Clip is being used as a Metaphor for Spiritual Growth.

OR

- (B) "Secular therapist and psychologists can only offer us self-help to manage/treat/cope with our symptoms, but they can never really offer us a cure to treat the root cause of our issues which is found in our hearts, only a God who will never leave you can do that."

Here the Movie Clip is being used as an Example of the Type of Help non-Christian can only offer.

OR

- (C) "While Bob believes the only help he can get is the worldly counsel of a self-help book, we know as believers that God's Word (the real book we should be turning to) offers us godly counsel for any situation we face in life."

Here the Movie Clip is being used as a – Object Lesson because as Christians, we should believe and behave differently from Bob.

Using Movie Clips in Various Parts of the Sermon

As an Introduction

Use a movie clip as the introduction to your message when...

- ...you want to simply introduce them to the idea
- ...you just want to generate interest or raise a need that ties into your message
- ...you want to use a movie clip to grab an audience's attention and whet their appetite for your sermon's idea, theme, topic or text
- ...you want to start with a dominant image or story that you will either use throughout the message or bookend by referring to as part of your conclusion
- ...when you want to show what's at stake or why they need to listen
- ...you want your audience to just think about the subject of your idea

Example: "Office Space" (1:26 min.)
 Sermon: Learning Contentment (Ps.131)

In this example, I wanted my audience to identify with the main character's experience of feeling frustrated with being stuck in traffic. This was then used as a *metaphor* for our experience of feeling stuck and discontented with life in general to where no matter what we do (changing lanes represented this), it seems that it doesn't change a thing about our lives. And to make matters worse, sometimes when we feel this way, we also have to watch as others move ahead of us in life (the old man in the clip represents this).

As an Illustration within the Body of the Message (Point, Application)

Use a movie clip within the body of your message when...

- ...you want to highlight or emphasize the sermon's idea
- ...you want to show them what you are talking about, either through comparison, contrast, or example

Example: "300" (2:29 min.)
 Sermon: Standing Firm in the Battle – part 4, Peace (Eph.6:10-18)

In this example, I wanted my audience to see how the enemy comes against you in order to try and make you lose your footing in life. And yet, through God's armament of Peace (Spartan's footwear represented this), we can Stand Firm in this Spiritual Battle we are in. This movie clip was both an *example* of what this piece of armament can do in our lives and also *symbolic* or *metaphoric* for spiritual warfare in general.

As a Conclusion

Use a movie clip as the conclusion of your message or part of it when...

...you want to reinforce or restate the main idea of the message

...you want to complement the subject brought up in your introduction

...you want to emphasize the application or action you want them to leave with

...you want them to "visualize" what the truth can favorably do in their life (immediately or future) if they were to follow God's Word

Example: Resurrection (4:10 min.)

Sermon: Resurrection: Do You Believe?

This example was part of a topical Easter message, where I gave reasons to believe in the resurrection. I also used a movie clip from the same movie at the start of my message that showed how this Roman soldier wondered if the resurrection was just a dream. I did this to lead into proving how the resurrection was not a dream, to which I then gave reasons why it was real and something my audience could believe in. After showing reasons to believe, I said something like: "Despite all these reasons, you still may be asking, 'Do I really believe?' Well, let's take a look at what the soldier found out, whether the resurrection was just a dream..." In this scene, you then see Jesus dramatically appear in the room with the soldier and the disciples. The scene is powerful and I wanted to make an emotional impact on my audience to where they left that day believing 100% in the resurrection.

Transitions and Movie Clips

Transitions, as Duane Litfin says, are the "bridges we build between the units of thought in a speech."

Role of Transitions:

- To show the relationship between Ideas/Movements/Points
- To Orient the audience by Summarizing what was just said (or in our case, touching on what they just saw) and then Showing them how this Relates to what you are about to Say by giving them a Preview of what's ahead in your message

Importance of Transitions with Movie Clips

Transition when using movie clips, are actually more important than with conventional sermons that don't use movie clips.

Reason being, from a communication stand-point, you are moving your audience from VISUAL to VERBAL or vice versa.

So, if you fail to make a proper Transition, you can potentially...

...lose your audience's attention, where their focus is still on what they just saw

...or possibly confuse your audience ("How does this relate to what he's now talking about?" or "Why did he show this?" or "What's this got to do with the Bible?")

...they'll leave thinking that you showed it just to be cool or entertaining

How Transitions Work with Movie Clips

Introduction

If you use a movie clip at the very start of your message, you only need to make a Transition-OUT once your movie clip is done playing and into the rest of your message. However, if your introduction includes some small-talk and/or Scripture reading before showing the movie clip, then you may also need a Transition-IN (see below).

A Transition-OUT is done by:

- (1) Comment briefly about what they just saw

Example: "Well, just as such and such got frustrated...."

Note: This serves in helping them move from VISUAL to VERBAL

- (2) Tell them how what they saw, relates to what you're about to say

Example: "...we too sometimes get frustrated with God..."

Note: This serves to validate the use of the movie clip, you're essentially saying, "This is why I showed this to you."

- (3) Direct them to your idea/topic/theme/text

Example: "...as we will see this morning from our text, we're not alone..."

Note: This demonstrates the purpose of the clip (don't assume they get it) and aids in moving them into either into your message for the first time or back into it if you're using a movie clip anywhere else in the message

Rest of the Sermon

If you use a movie clip anywhere other than the introduction/beginning of your message, then you must also have both a Transition-IN as well as a Transition-OUT. In other words, you need to transition into the movie clip before it starts and then transition out of the movie clip once it is done playing.

A Transition-IN is done by:

- (1) Briefly telling them that they are about to see something (this may or may not include the title of the movie)

Example: "Now, I want you to take a look at this scene, (from __)..."

Note: This cues the audience that you are about to shift from VERBAL to VISUAL

- (2) Briefly provide some reason as to why they want to watch it

Example: "...that I think will show us, what the Scripture means when it talks about... "

Note: Don't necessarily give the scene away or you will lose Tension. Just give them enough to whet their appetite to engage and watch

Note: This is important to do, especially if your church is new to using movie clips and/or you're concerned about your audience's sensitivity to what they are about to see

- (3) Give them a verbal cue, which will also serve to cue your operator

Example: "...take a look." or "...watch this."

Note: This is the final step in moving them from VERBAL to VISUAL

Exception to the Rule

If the Tone or Emotional Impact of what you just said, equally matches the Tone or Emotional Impact of the movie clip you are about to use, then it is possible to just briefly PAUSE, and have the movie clip play without using a Transition-IN.

Nonverbals and Movie Clips

Nonverbals are not only things like our outward appearance, eye contact, and vocal delivery, but more importantly with the use of movie clips, they deal with our movements and gestures.

Facial Gestures

If your audience can see you while the movie clip is playing, you should be aware that your expressions can tell them...

...the tone of the movie clip, whether they should take it as humorous or serious

...the believability and importance of the movie clip, if you don't look like you're watching and paying attention to it, then why should they

Movements

If the movie clip is part of your introduction, if possible, remain seated in the front row. Then you're not up there possibly distracting them with your other movement. Plus, it signals to them, that since you're seating and paying attention, so should they.

If you're in a church where there's a seat on stage or if you're in a situation where you're already on the stage, try to sit down when the movie clip begins to play. If the movie clip is short, just stand there not fidgeting and focus on the movie. Or if you don't have a pulpit and preach sitting down, just remain seated.

Near the end of the movie clip, begin to move into your normal posture for preaching, whether that's directly behind the pulpit, or sitting with your eyes to the front.

Also, just as with Facial Gestures, your body language can clue the audience in on how they should take the movie clip (i.e., serious or humorous) and whether or not it's important to watch.

Time Considerations

Short Movie Clip = 1-2.5 minutes

Medium Movie Clip = 2.5-4 minutes

Long Movie Clip = 4-6 minutes

Recommendations

If movie clip is in Introduction, then you can use anywhere from Short to Long

If movie clip is in Body, then you may want to use something Short

If movie clip is in Conclusion, then you can use anywhere from Short to Medium

Power Considerations

Because movies and movie clips, are powerful story tellers, you need to take that into consideration when selecting and placing a movie clip to avoid either losing their attention in the body of your message with something too strong or too distracting or overwhelming them with an movie clip in the beginning that is much too powerful.

By power, we mean the emotional-charge a person gets from viewing a movie clip.

Recommendations

On a Scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the Strongest and 3 being the Weakest, here are some recommendations.

If the movie clip is in the Introduction, then use a...

...**2** (something that strongly grabs attention or interest but does not overwhelm)

If the movie clip is in the Body, then use a...

...**3** (something that is touching/moving and shows what you're talking about)

If the movie clip is in the Conclusion, then try to use a...

...**1** (something that is intense and really drives home your idea or point)

Using Movie Clips in Various Sermonic Development and Forms

Haddon Robinson

	Deductive	Inductive	Inductive-Deductive	Subject-Completed
Introduction	IDEA – movie clip			Subj Introduces IDEA – movie clip here OR
	I	I	I	I – clip to complement
Body	II	II	IDEA – movie clip	II – " "
	III	III	II	III – " "
			III	
Conclusion		IDEA – movie clip		

The Movie-Mirroring Message (use the same movie throughout w/different scenes)

Start with a Movie Clip/Text



Flip Flop between Movie Clip and Text



IDEA



Application

First-Person or Third-Person Narratives

1. Start with Movie Clip that Introduces your audience to your Biblical Character, Event or Setting.

IF you are Role-Playing a Bible Character that remains in Biblical times, you will need to use a Christian movie.

IF you are Role-Playing a Bible Character that either leaps ahead into Modern Time or you're doing a Twenty-First Century Version of that Character, then you can use a Secular movie clip depicting a scene representing modern times (scenes of city/culture)

2. Begin your 1st or 3rd Person Narrative

Andy Stanley's "ME, WE, GOD, YOU, WE"

You could easily pick any five of its movements to place a movie clip in.

- ME** **[Engage and Establish Common Ground and the Reason to Listen]**
 ...you could play a movie clip that would engage the audience or establish common ground.
- WE** **[Create Tension here that needs to be resolved before moving on]**
 ...you could create tension by possibly showing a scene that does not have a satisfying resolution whereby forcing the audience to allow the preacher to resolve it.
- GOD** **[Engage them with the Text/make this part of the Journey]**
 ...you may use a movie clip to display a character's journey that could match a journey of a character in the Bible or show it from a Christian movie
- YOU** **["So What? Now What?" - Practical Step/Specific Application]**
 ...all you have to do is use a movie clip that actually shows the application or action, you desire your audience to take
- WE** **[Inspire the Vision of what this Step/Application can do]**
 ...you can visually demonstrate through a movie clip, what following the application can do or produce, not only for them but also for others.

Lowry's Homiletic Plot

Movement 1

In Movement 1 of Lowry's development, where you Engage your audience by introducing a theme or conflict...

...you can show a movie clip that displays a conflict in action, a belief or an attitude

Movement 2 (Why is there a conflict/tension)

Movement 3 (Possible Clues to Resolve it)

Movement 4 (Experience a Biblical Answer/Solution)

Movement 5

In Movement 5, where Lowry basically shows Application or What to Do...

...you can use a movie clip where the audience sees what to do

Specific Things to Consider about Your Audience Before Using a Movie Clip

- Will someone in your congregation be overly upset knowing the Rating or Content of the film this movie clip came from?

Note: Unfortunately, you can't necessarily go by ratings today. Plus, the movie clips we're showing are usually for all audiences and should already not contain things like language and graphic violence.

- Is the type of humor appropriate (i.e., too cruel, too sick, etc.)
- Is the level of violence, be it action-violence or comedic-violence, too much for your particular audience?
- Is there something else in the movie clip that will offend or hurt someone?

Only You will know How to answer these Questions!

Recommendation: Have a formal or informal advisory team in your church. A group of people made up of adults from various ages and backgrounds, parents of small children, parents of teenagers, etc. This team can then act as your sounding board, were you either talk to all or some of the people in the group with whom you think would be sensitive to a particular movie clip BEFORE you show it or, it can be a way of gaining feedback AFTER you show it.

Specific Things to Consider about Your Sermon Before Using a Movie Clip

- Does the movie clip overpower either the point or statement you are about to make?

Recommendation: If you still want to use it, save it as your conclusion. This is true for conventional illustrations as well.

- Does the movie clip in any way, conflict with the main idea of the message or the next thing you're about to say?
- Does the movie clip clearly convey the point you want it to make (i.e., will they get it)?
- Does the movie clip distract your audience away from what you're preaching on?
- Does the movie clip actually illustrate or is it just for show?
- Does my entire message hinge on a particular movie clip? (Note: A message should only hinge on the biblical text and not on any type of support material.)

Other Considerations

Legal

Make sure you either have a CVLI (www.cvli.org) or you obtain a movie clip from a source that has already been granted licensing to show that particular scene in your setting from the studio that produced it

Technical

Make sure you have the proper equipment and people trained to use it. Don't be cheap or it will come back to bite you.

Methods of Showing Movie Clips:

VCR/DVD Player – the portion you want to play is cued-up. This is the least recommended way, if for any reason, either the person operating it can mess up and you end up showing part of a scene that you didn't intend (even a part with offensive content) or the equipment just fails to start and stop the scene exactly where you wanted it.

PC or MAC + DVD drive – this in combination with a software player like PowerDVD, Windows Media Player or Apple's DVD software. While this is better, it's still not ideal since some of the same mistakes can happen with the above method.

Movie Clip File – this is ideal as you can embed the exact scene you want to play and run it seamlessly as part of your overall presentation. On a PC, you usually use WMV files or MPEG 1 or 2 files within PowerPoint or programs like MediaShout. On a Mac, you use QuickTime MOV or MP4 files within Keynote or PowerPoint for Mac. **Note:** If you download these, make sure they carry licensing or you obtain it on your own.

Note: See the back of your guide for a list of resources relating to movies, from things like where to download movie clips or where to get ideas for movie illustration.

Practical

Make sure you actually practice playing the movie clip BEFORE you show it either the day before or before the service starts. Hopefully, this will catch any mistakes your operator could make or point out any hardware failure(s) which can happen at anytime, especially if you're using a PC :)

One more practical note, if you use something like PowerPoint, print out your slides with notes ahead of time for your operator, so that he or she will know when to go to the slide that starts the movie clip and what to do after the movie clip is done playing.

Planning

Always be prepared if something goes wrong with the movie clip. For one, try to avoid making your sermon hinge on it. To be safe, have a backup illustration. The easiest thing to do in a pinch is to simply describe the scene you were going to show and talk about how it connects to what you were going to say.

Example: "Batman"

"I don't know about any of you, but I am a huge Batman fan! Maybe some of you remember the first Batman movie where Batman swoops in on these two bad guys who just stole a purse. And you know, they're like, 'there's no such thing as Batman!' And then *tatatata!* Batman just jumps down and they're all scared, but one of them actually shoots Batman four times in the chest. But what really freaked this guy out, was the fact that Batman got up unharmed... Well, superheroes aren't the only ones who need protection and some form of armor..."

Introducing Movie Clips

If your church or ministry setting either does not currently use movie clips and/or you're not sure if your people are ready for them, here are some ideas to get started:

- Use Special Occasion (like Easter, Christmas) or Special Events to Introduce them
- Use Alternative (Contemporary) or Evening or Special Services to Introduce them
- Use them as part of Sunday School (children, teen or adult)
- Develop a Small Group where you use movies as discussion starters

When you do finally use them, make sure the first time nothing goes wrong and the use of the movie clip really knocks their socks off. Otherwise, you'll leave them with a negative impression not only about movie clips, but the use of visually technology in general.

When you do begin to use them, make sure the operation of it is consistent. It's important to not over use movie clips, for they can either foster a feeling of entertainment ("what no movie clip today?") or it will begin to over time, diminish their impact and freshness.

BREAK FOR LUNCH (1 hour)

- Tell them where the food is and where to eat (at their tables)
- Ask them to feel free to socialize but to also start thinking about their sermons and how to apply this stuff
- Tell them what to expect after lunch

Each of you will start with 1 sermon and in one sentence tell your group what the sermon was about, its primary passage, how you Introduced it and why you chose to do it that way (what were you trying to accomplish with your audience?). You will then begin the 1st exercise of replacing that introduction with a movie clip.

[Note: Provided access to Books and Websites where they can download movie clips and view ideas during this part of the workshop]

Part II: Practicum (1:30min)

Setting: For this exercise, assume you're in a setting where movie clips are totally okay

Reminder: Don't use a Sermon you originally used a movie clip with

Instruction: Change Groups each time

A. New Introduction Using a Movie Clip

1. Prepare (20min)

- Break into a group of 2-3
- Take turns sharing your sermon in the group by telling:
 - What your sermon was about in one sentence
 - How you introduced it and why you chose to do it that way (what were you trying to accomplish with your audience?)
- After hearing each person, the group will choose 1 person's sermon to use
- As a group, work together to Brain Storm, use books, and websites like movieministry.com and wingclips.com to select a movie clip
- Also, prepare a Transition-OUT

[Immediately inform me so I help get it and set it up for the mockup]

Note: The person's sermon you picked, will be the spokesman for the group

2. Present (5min)

Tell the entire group what your sermon was about in one sentence

Tell the entire group what movie clip you chose and why

Role play, show us the clip and then actually show us how you would preach it including your transition(s)

3. Feedback (5min)

B. New Illustration w/in the Body of the Message (Pt/App)

1. Prepare (20min)

- Break into a group of 2-3
- Take turns sharing your sermon in the group by telling:
 - What your sermon was about in one sentence (if need be)
 - One illustration/support material you used in the body of your message and why you chose it (what were you trying to accomplish with your audience?)
- After hearing each person, the group will choose 1 person's sermon to use
- As a group, work together to Brain Storm, use books, and websites like movieministry.com and wingclips.com to select a movie clip
- Also, prepare a Transition-IN & OUT

[Immediately inform me so I can get it and set it up]

Note: The person's sermon you picked, will be the spokesman for the group

2. Present (5min)

Tell the entire group what your sermon was about in one sentence

Tell the entire group what movie clip you chose and why

Role play, show us the clip and then actually show us how you would preach it including your transitions

3. Feedback (5min)

C. New Conclusion Using a Movie Clip

1. Prepare (20min)

- Break into a group of 2-3
- Take turns sharing your sermon in the group by telling:
 - What your sermon was about in one sentence (if need be)
 - How you concluded it and why did you chose to do it that way (what were you trying to leave with your audience?)
- After hearing each person, the group will choose 1 person's sermon to use
- As a group, work together to Brain Storm, use books, and websites like movieministry.com and wingclips.com to select a movie clip
- Also, prepare a Transition-IN & OUT

[Immediately inform me so I can get it and set it up]

Note: The person's sermon you picked, will be the spokesman for the group

2. Present (5min)

Tell the entire group what your sermon was about in one sentence

Tell the entire group what movie clip you chose and why

Role play, show us the clip and then actually show us how you would preach it including your transitions

3. Feedback (5min)

Part III: Q& A (15min)

Part IV: Survey (10min)

Part V: Wrap up (5min)

- Collect surveys
- Thank them for coming
- Asking them to clean up after themselves
- Inviting them to stick around for questions they may have

NOTE ABOUT THE THESIS VERSION OF THIS GUIDE

In the back of the Leader's Guide that I used and in the back of the Participant's Guide that attendees got at the workshop, it included the list of resources that were identical to the list of resources in the Appendix of this thesis. Therefore, it will not be repeated once again here.

It should also be noted that the Participant's Guide was almost identical to the Leader's Guide with a few exceptions. This was done to save time—time I would have to give participants to write and possibly repeat things. Another difference between the two guides was the fact that the Participant's Guide did not have details about "Preliminary Items" and "Wrap Up" which were my own notes. Also, the times to teach each section were not included in their guide. The only times left in their version was the amount of time they had to complete each exercise (preparation, presentation, and feedback).

In addition, the movie clips mentioned were actually shown. However, because of licensing and other restrictions, they can not be included with this thesis.

SURVEY

How long have you been in your current church or ministry setting?

What is your current position?

How many years have you been preaching on a consistent basis?

What is your Age?

Have you had any formal ministry training or education, if so what and how many years?

Have you ever used a movie clip as part of your sermon?

If No, why not? Was it because your church doesn't have the equipment or is there another reason?

If Yes, in your opinion, how effective was it in supporting your sermon either that one time or in generally, how effective is it normally used?

In terms of this workshop, what was the *most* helpful thing about it and Why?

What was the *least* helpful thing about it and Why?

Was there something you wished was covered in this workshop, but was not?

If there is, also indicate why this is important to you.

Overall, how would you rate this workshop on a scale of 1 to 5?

1	2	3	4	5
poor	just okay	average	good	excellent

If you've never used a movie clip before, how likely will you after attending this workshop? (only answer if this applies)

1	2	3	4	5
no way	probably not	maybe	very likely	definitely

If you are currently using movie clips, how will this workshop affect how you use movie clips in your particular setting? (only answer if this applies)

1	2	3	4	5
no change	minor adj.	not sure	things to reconsider	total overhaul

Other Comments or Suggestions

CHAPTER V

GENERALIZATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The experience of writing this thesis and working on the project design has been a real labor of love. I have always been a huge fan of movies and have always consistently noticed how they can be applied to my life and my preaching. With that said, I went into this doctoral program knowing full well what I wanted my thesis to be on. This allowed me almost three years to collect and read almost everything written about the subject of movies, as it related to ministry in general and preaching. In addition, as I sat through each class year after year, I made side notes as to how what was being discussed could apply to my topic. While I believe this was a wise thing to do, it also created an incredibly large amount of research and notes to organize and study—just organizing this material took months. I had too many ideas about what I wanted to say and write regarding this topic. The reason I may have been so intense was because my original thought was to do a book. However, considering my time limitations and my desire for the best quality product possible, it seemed more prudent to create a workshop. This thought, combined with counsel from one of my advisors, convinced me that conducting a workshop would enable me to see what information in my material may need additional improvement. I decided that this process would serve me better if, God willing, I am able to write a book someday.

The workshop conducted was four hours long and consisted of two main parts: instruction and practicum. There was also an hour break in which lunch was provided as a convenience to the participants. Upon arrival, participants received Participant Guides, preprinted name badges, and a resource CD.

As a result of my study, I am more convinced than ever that there needs to be a definitive work on how to implement movie clips in expository preaching. My thoughts were confirmed as I taught my material in the workshop. The pastors participating in the workshop had prepared sermons before and were at least familiar with the basic principles of expository preaching—but none understood how movie clips might fit into their preparation of the sermon and the preaching of the message itself. If there was one thing I would do differently in this thesis, it would be to conduct more extensive surveys about how preachers are using movie clips and what their opinions are about the clips' effectiveness. Although I did include some of this information, it was very limited, due partly to the fact that the idea of using movie clips in preaching is new. By "new," I don't mean that it's just now being done: I mean that for the general populace of preachers, it seems to be area that many are just now exploring or have just thought of doing.

Regarding the teaching experience itself, I have to say that I had a lot of fun (maybe too much fun!), but my overall feeling was that it went very well. As I spoke to the pastors that day, I found myself moved by passion for what I was saying, and according to comments after the workshop, others sensed and appreciated that. Overall, the ministers who came that day were very grateful for me sharing this information. None of them had ever had a class or seminar on this topic; minimally, one or two of them had taken some coursework on the use of general multimedia in preaching.

My survey results showed that most of those in attendance had been serving as pastors in their current churches for a period of 2-to-9 years. With the exception of one youth pastor, they were senior pastors in their local churches and had been preaching consistently for 7-to-20 years. The youngest participant was 28, and the oldest was 50. Almost all of the attendees had seminary training, with the exception of two, who had only *formally* learned about preaching during Bible College. There was one participant with a Ph.D. in preaching. Out of all the participants, half had used movie clips with some frequency, and the other half had used them either once or never. All participants who said that they had used a movie clip in the past commented that overall, they felt it was effective in bringing out their idea or point in some manner. Some participants said that for the times they felt things did go wrong, it was usually their fault for not properly picking or implementing the movie clip in their sermon—and some experienced technical issues.

When asked about the most helpful element of the workshop, some participants responded that the Participant's Guide was the most useful thing about our time together. Others liked the fact that I explained the different types of movie clips and how they can be used. Still others responded that it was helpful to learn how movie clips can work for the various parts of a sermon and the importance of transitions. One participant responded that he thought everything was helpful and that it was one of the best workshops he had ever attended. One comment mentioned appreciation for the fact that I recognized to whom I was speaking and how the material was geared toward pastors.

For the question asking for comments about the least helpful thing about the workshop, most participants either said nothing or left it blank. Although that was

encouraging, I really wanted some constructive feedback. The two who did respond to this question indicated that they wished more time was set aside for either doing the exercises themselves or for me to work with them to develop a new sermon and then use the principles described in the guide. One comment that came with this feedback that somewhat surprised me; said that I took too much time away from the workshop by discussing expository preaching. At the beginning of the workshop, I informed participants that I needed to describe what I meant by expository preaching in order to establish a frame of reference. The section on expository preaching only took about 10-to-15 minutes. I actually felt that there was much more about expository preaching that I needed to say but didn't, especially because I knew some of them came from educational backgrounds that taught a form of biblical preaching in which sermons were based on keywords and generally included three points, a poem, and the use of alliteration. With that said, I may have come across too strong about what is and isn't expository preaching in the Participant's Guide and in the workshop.

When attendees were asked what one thing they wished was different about the workshop the two common responses related the need for more information about technology and the need for more time. After listening and talking to these men during our breaks, I concluded that most of them, with two exceptions, were not extremely familiar with technology—their knowledge seemed to be limited to knowing what software they used during their worship service. It's possible that a younger ministerial audience may have been more knowledgeable about technology. I agree that more time would have made the workshop more beneficial. When I do this workshop again, I will either make it a full day or break it up into two days, with the first day focusing on

instruction and the second day conducting the practical exercises. Sometimes during the workshop, I felt hurried as I went over the material. Specifically, the material I felt was either already mentioned or something attendees were already familiar with, such as the expository preaching part.

On average, participants rated the workshop (with 5 being excellent) either as a 4 or 5—in fact, it was almost an even split. I am pleased to see such a high rating for the workshop, but for me, the best indicator of this workshop's effectiveness can be found in the answers to the next question: "If you've never used a movie clip before, how likely will you after attending this workshop?" With the exception of one person, the survey showed that everyone who had indicated that they had never used a movie clip before, circled that they will "definitely" use one in the future. The one person who was the exception circled "very likely." For those who were already using movie clips: two participants circled that the workshop gave them things to reconsider; and another two participants indicated that they either need some minor adjustments to how they were using movie clips or they weren't really sure at this point. The comments that followed were mainly composed of remarks of gratitude, indicating great information or just a great presentation.

After reading these surveys and reflecting on my own thoughts, there are definitely some other things that I would do differently. As mentioned, the workshop does need more time. In creating and preparing this workshop, I originally thought that I would draw more people if I advertised the fact that it was only half a day. As a pastor myself, I realize the limited time these men have in their ministry, so I purposely made it this way and also offered it on a Monday, since my own experience indicates that as the

best day for pastors to attend. However, a full day would have been more beneficial to the attendees as well as myself.

In addition, had I been teaching this as a course at a seminary or as an extended seminar, I would have felt it necessary to spend more time explaining the entire process of getting the idea for the sermon and when is it appropriate to look for movie clips. My experience and observations tell me that many pastors who use movie clips get a clip first and then find text to support it, or they carelessly choose movie clips that don't effectively support and enhance their sermons.

One observation I made during the workshop was that some pastors over age 40 were somewhat hesitant to use a movie clip in their setting, mostly due to fear about what their traditional congregations would think of their preacher using a movie as part of his sermon. Others voiced concerns regarding the idea of showing secular movies; yet, despite these fears, comments and survey results showed that although some may be timid about using movie clips, they saw the value of using movie clips in their preaching.

There were also many times during the workshop in which I saw the proverbial light bulb turn on over participants' heads. One of these times was when I was describing the five types of movie clips and showing why at different times, they fit into different categories. I believe that participants reacted positively to this because my explanation helped them understand how I arrived at identifying and implementing movie clips in my preaching, which in turn gave them some guidance for how they can do the same.

In retrospect, I would encourage a person considering teaching and hosting this workshop to have four things at his or her teaching location. The first is multiple computers with high-speed Internet access, which is needed in order for participants to

quickly find and download their movie clips from the recommended websites during the practicum. A second suggestion is to have the computers already logged on to these recommended websites, before the participants begin their exercises. This is easily done if the host church already has a subscription to one or more of these licensed sites. Three, the teacher should ensure that the location has the necessary audio and visual equipment to display movie clips and that they are in working order. A final suggestion is to have at least one additional person, who is experienced with movie clips and technology in general, present at least during the practicum part of the workshop. This is needed if attendance is high, especially since there are times when individual attention is needed during the group exercises.

Overall, what I learned from this entire experience was that there is a need for this information. As novel as it seems, this information is helpful and practical. Especially given the fact that we live in a visual culture in which more and more ministers are seemingly wanting to use movie clips but don't know how to do so effectively, which prevents them from trying. At least some of this hesitation seems to come, at least for Evangelicals, from a high respect for Scripture and the fear of not wanting to do anything that could possibly take away from its impact as it is communicated. Many preachers are hesitant to implement something they're not sure how to do or do well. This I believe reflects the general consensus of communicators and most scholars that if you're going to use something like movie clips in preaching, then it must be done at a level of excellence, for there is no middle ground. I personally understand that sentiment and agree with that great conviction, which is why I wrote this thesis.

APPENDIX

LIST OF RESOURCES

Websites for Obtaining Movie Clips

The following websites are listing in order from best source to least to obtain actual movie clips as defined in chapter 2:

- www.wingclips.com – Site to download free and subscription based movie clips from both major motion picture studios as well as smaller independent film makers. This site is catered to non-profits and one does not have to obtain a separate license from sources like CVLI to legally use them;
- www.screenvue.com – Partner site of CVLI to download movie clips from both major motion picture studios as well as clips from Christian and Independent films. This site provides two annual subscription plans, one where you get a DVD/CD sent to you containing the latest Christian films plus the ability to download or just the membership plan to download. As a partner of Christian Video Licensing Inc., a CVLI license comes with membership for non-profits.
- www.sermonspice.com – Site to download some free movie clips as part of various studio promotions of upcoming and newly release movies that Hollywood feels will appeal to Christians. These clips often are linked to either MovieMinistry.com where one can view its corresponding illustration

ideas or SermonCentral.com where one can view suggested sermons sponsored by Outreach Media Group and their relation to studios seeking promote their films. In addition, one can download or purchase kits and other study material as part of this promotion package. These clips are also intended for non-profits and carry with them licensing. SermonSpice.com also sells individual video clips, loops, and countdowns from various third party sources.

Websites with Movie Illustrations

The following websites are listing in order from best source to least to obtain movie illustration ideas as defined in chapter 2:

- www.movieministry.com – Site dedicated to providing the best in movie illustrations, Bible study materials based on movies, and FilmTalk Cards. What's interesting to note is that, other than providing start and stop times to cue DVD playback, this site always provides the big idea of the scene or film. Various annual membership plans are offered.
- www.christianitytoday.com/movies - Site hosted and operated by Christianity Today. *CT at the Movies*, offers movie illustrations, film news and reviews, forums, and purchasable discussion guides. The site also offers links to buy or rent some of the movies it features.
- www.sermoncentral.com – Site offering mainly free and subscription based service to view sermons searchable by topics, verse, keyword or contributor. Site also features various types of illustrations including ideas from movies submitted by various contributors. This site also features PowerPoint

templates and slides, as well as links to purchase video clips from SermonSpice.com and products from Outreach.

Books Containing Movie Illustration Ideas and Discussion Guides

The following is a list of books in no certain order or ranking and does not contain full bibliographical information:

- *Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching*
- *More Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching*
- *Movie Nights*
- *Movie Nights for Kids*
- *Movie Nights for Teens*
- *Chick Flicks: Group's Dinner and a Movie*
- *Movie Clips For Kids, Group*
- *Movie Clips For Kids: The Sequel, Group*
- *Videos That Teach*
- *Videos That Teach 2*
- *Videos That Teach 3*
- *Videos That Teach 4*
- *Blockbuster Movie Illustrations*
- *Blockbuster Movie Illustrations – The Sequel*
- *Blockbuster Movie Illustrations – The Return*
- *Group's Blockbuster Movie Events*
- *Group's Dinner and a Movie*

Books Using Movies to Discuss Theology

The following is a list of books in no certain order or ranking and does not contain full bibliographical information:

- *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies*
- *Scripture on the Silver Screen*
- *Movies That Matter*
- *Saint Paul at the Movies*
- *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies*
- *Useless Beauty: Ecclesiastes through the Lens of Contemporary Film*
- *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith*
- *Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema*
- *Religion and Film: An Introduction*
- *Explorations in Theology and Film*

Books Using Movies for Liturgy

- *Lights Camera...Faith! A Movie Lectionary – Cycle A, Movie Lover's Guide to Scripture*
- *Lights Camera...Faith! A Movie Lectionary – Cycle B, Movie Lover's Guide to Scripture*
- *Lights Camera...Faith! A Movie Lectionary – Cycle C, Movie Lover's Guide to Scripture*

Books Using Movies for Prayer or Devotion

- *Praying the Movies*
- *Devotionals for Guys Who Like Movies*

Recommended Reading List

- *Behind the Screen: Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film, and Culture*
 - *Understanding Movies (11th Edition)*
 - *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry*
 - *The Hollywood Project: A Look into the Minds of the Makers Spiritually*
- Relevant Films*
- *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*
 - *Art and the Bible*

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VITA

Michael William Ruest was born March 22, 1969 in the city of Pusan while his father was stationed in South Korea. Michael's parents, Ronald and Tina, brought him to the United States when he was around two years of age to the state of Virginia where he grew up and graduated from Menchville High School in Newport News. After attending Christopher Newport University, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. While serving in the Army, Michael received a call into fulltime ministry and later graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity in 1996. He then worked fulltime in the computer industry while completing preliminary Ph.D. work and serving with various churches. It was during this time that he was asked to serve as senior pastor of NewLife Community Church in northern Denver, Colorado. While serving there, Michael studied from 2004 to 2007 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His anticipated date of graduation is January of 2008. Michael, his wife Angel, and their daughter Mikayla currently live in Thornton, Colorado where he continues to serve as senior pastor of NewLife Community Church.